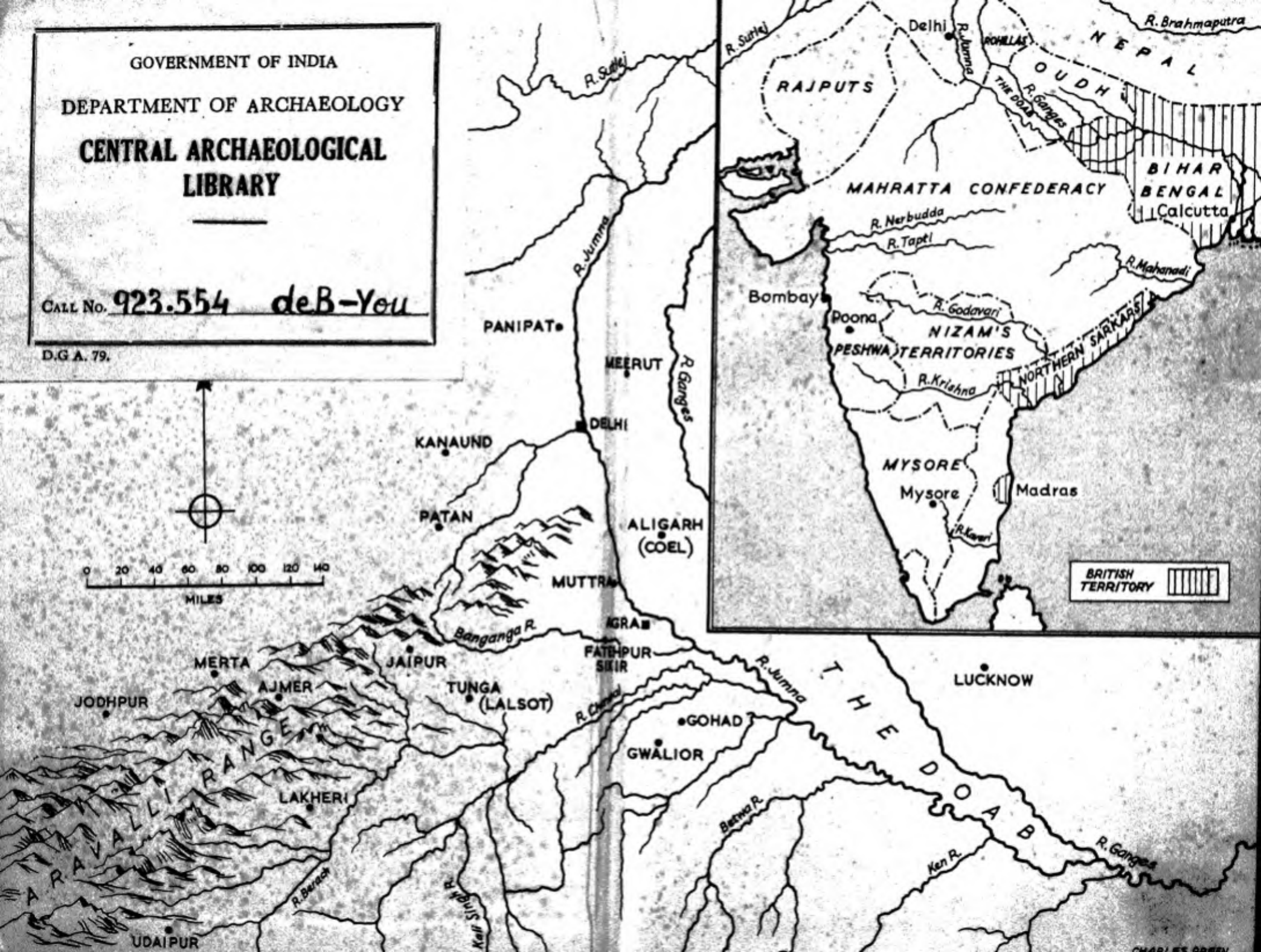
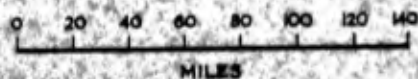


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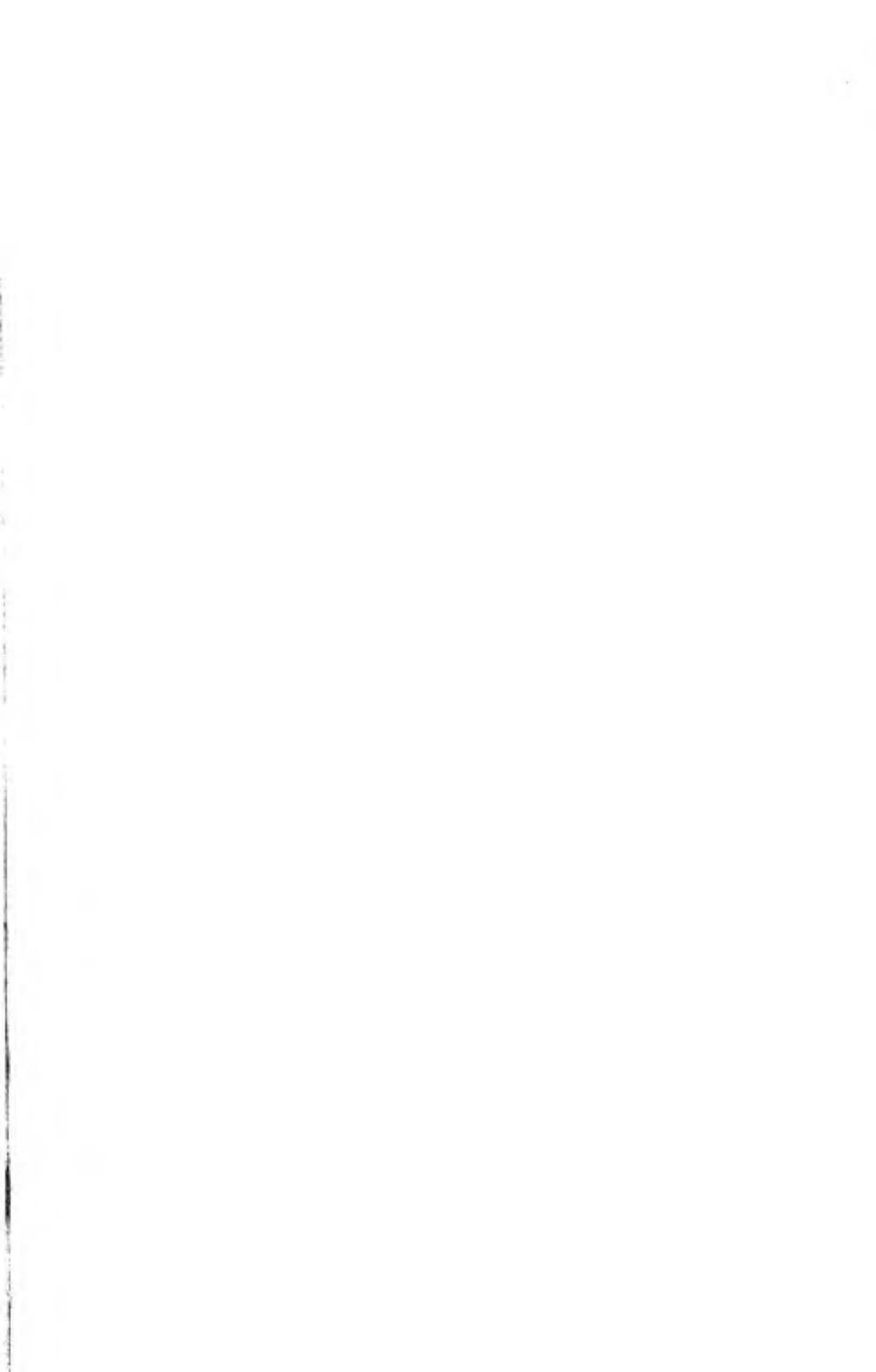


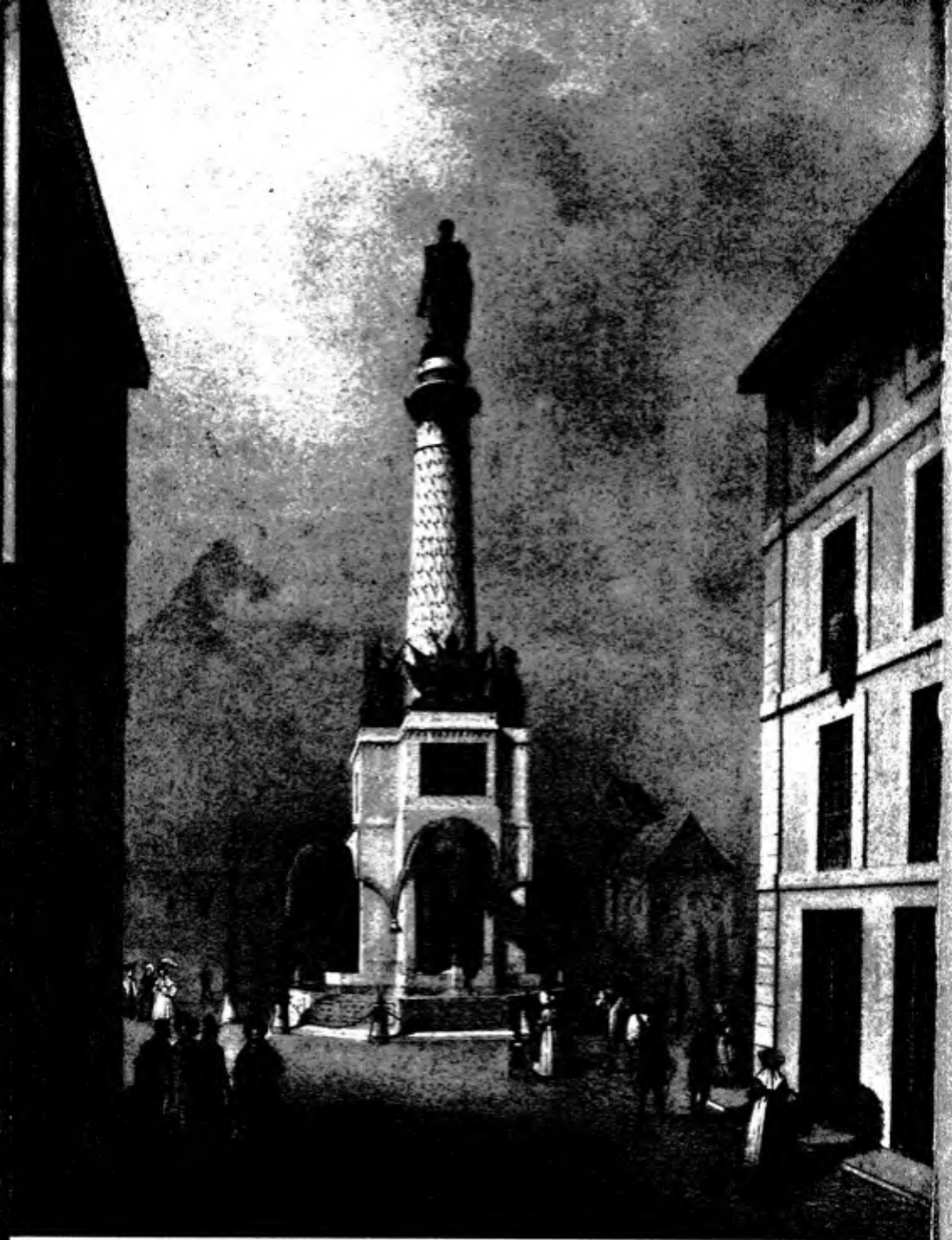


*FOUNTAIN
OF THE ELEPHANTS*

By the Same Author

SHIP ASHORE
ROMMEL





THE FOUNTAIN OF THE ELEPHANTS

DESMOND YOUNG

Fountain of the Elephants

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*qui post Indiam eminentissime gubernatam
oculis ad alias gentes conversis Africam
summo acumine nobis illuminavit*

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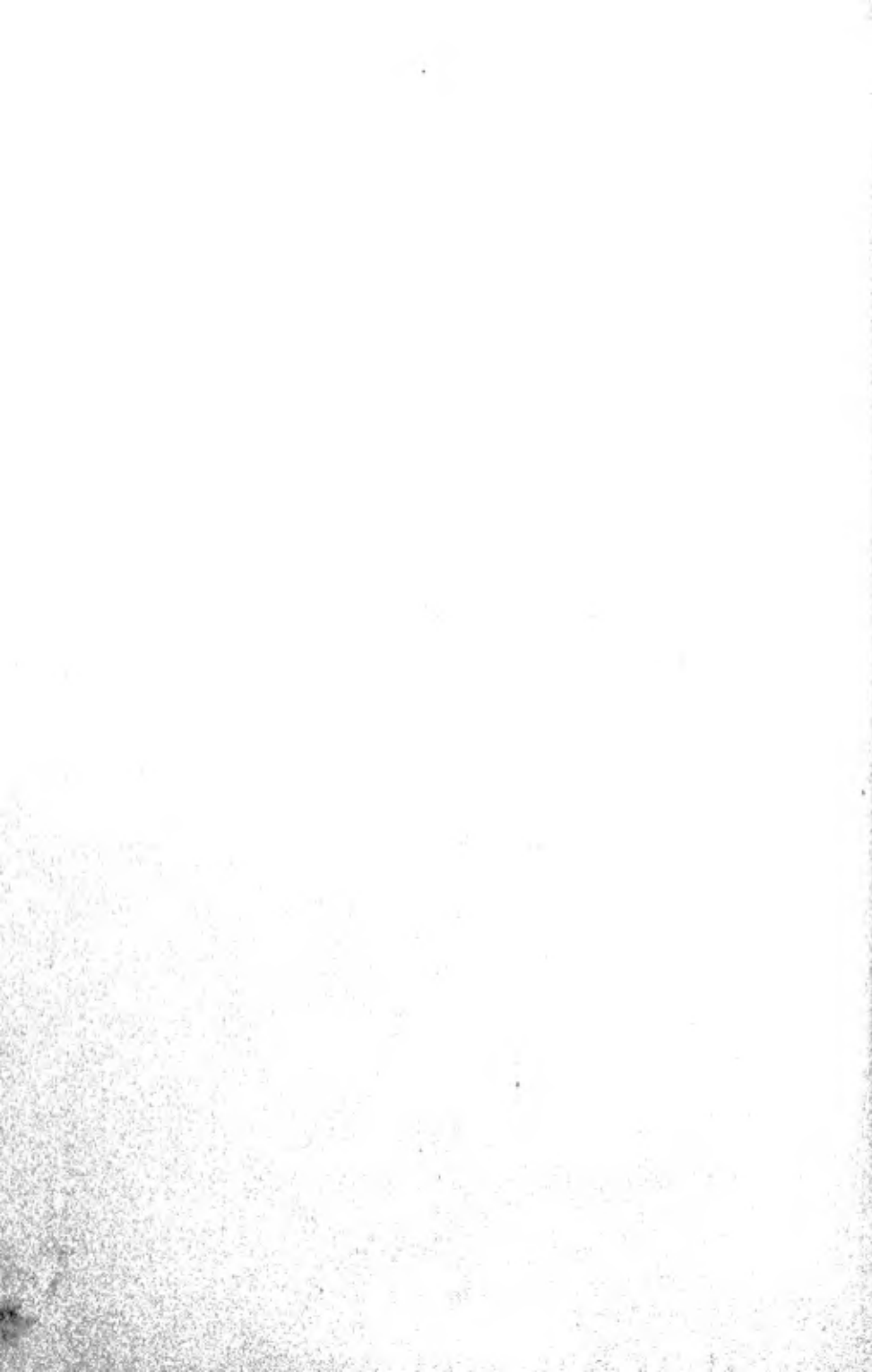
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PREFACE

For six years before the last war I lived in Lucknow, capital of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. It was, as Sir Henry Lawrence described it a century earlier, "a curious and splendid city", unlike any other in India.

It was also an historic city. And because its history, for my generation, centres on books read in boyhood about the Indian Mutiny, it was to the Residency that I was first drawn. Lucknow has, however, older memories than those of the Mutiny and increasingly often I found myself turning towards La Martinière, that strange, rococo palace on the banks of the Gumti. With its profusion of statuary, with its huge red plaster lions, rampant, with lamps in their eye-sockets, how did this conception, absurd yet not without a certain grandeur, spring from the brain of a French private soldier who left his native Lyons at sixteen and never again saw Europe?

My interest in Claud Martin, sometime Chief Artificer to the King of Oudh and Major-General in the service of the Honourable East India Company, was rewarded. Martin was an amusing and sympathetic character. But adventurous as was his career, his life was almost uneventful compared with that of his closest friend, who reached Lucknow by a very devious route from Chambéry in Savoy and is the subject of this memoir.

For me the journey in reverse, from pre-war Lucknow

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to post-war Chambéry, has also been long and devious. With time out for war and other distractions, it has taken more than twenty years. As an amateur in research I could never have come to the end without the generous help of many on whose time and knowledge I had no right to make a claim. None of them is to blame for mistakes and shortcomings in this book; to all I am most grateful.

I must first thank the Countess Elzéar de Boigne for her kindness in allowing me to see the family papers at Chambéry, her son, Count Jean, and the Countess Jean de Boigne, for much hospitality, help and encouragement and their friend, Count d'Adhémar, whose knowledge of recondite French sources is unequalled. I am also most grateful to the Countess de Brantes for permitting me to examine and quote from the Perron papers at Fresne and to Madame Cherbrier of the Bibliothèque Nationale for expert guidance in that great library.

In India I owe a debt to the late Sir Jadunath Sarkar who, at the age of eighty, was always ready to answer questions; to my friend Purnendu Basu, who helped my wife in her first researches in the Archives at Delhi when she and I were still in uniform; to my former colleague, S. N. Ghosh, Editor of *The Pioneer*, who followed up old trails in Lucknow; to Dr. Ram Babu Saksena and to Professor Syed Masud Hasan Rizavi, late of Lucknow University.

Nearer home, I have had the most generous help over many years from Dr. C. Collin Davies, Reader in Indian History in the University of Oxford, author of *Warren Hastings and Oudh* and a leading authority on the period. I have also to thank Dr. Keith Feiling, author of *Warren Hastings*, Sir Lewis Namier and Miss Sutherland, Principal

PREFACE

of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, for corresponding with me and Mrs. (Isabel) Shapiro of the School of Slavonic Studies in the University of London for some valuable suggestions as to sources.

His Grace the Duke of Northumberland was good enough to make a personal and successful search at Alnwick for a sailing-log of Lord Algernon Percy of nearly two centuries ago while Sir William Hayter, then H.M. Ambassador in Moscow, not only approached the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on my behalf but contrived to put me into touch with Professor Sidorov, Director of the Institute of History in the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R.

My thanks are also due to the Librarian and staff of the India Office Library, to my friend Mr. A. H. Joyce, Information Officer in the Commonwealth Relations Office, to Professor James M. Osborn of Yale University and Professor Holden Furber of the University of Pennsylvania, in both of which universities are collections of Lord Macartney's papers, to Lord Dillon, to Mr. Peter Quennell, to Count Jean de Warren, to Brigadier Humphrey Bullock, to Brigadier John Masters, to Lt. Col. G. E. F. Wheeler, to Mr. Gerald Hanley, to Mr. G. M. Batho, to Mr. Gordon Slyfield, to Mr. John Needham, to Mr. Wyndham Robinson and to Miss Mary Kesteven, who spent many laborious days in the British Museum and the archives at Chambéry. I must make special mention, too, of Mr. Basil O'Connell, K. M., of the Genealogical Office of Dublin Castle, who has gone to great pains to supplement my knowledge of the O'Connell family and to search for papers.

Finally, there are two friends to whom I am particularly indebted. The first is Mrs. Lewinson, an expert in research, who has followed up countless clues with the liveliest

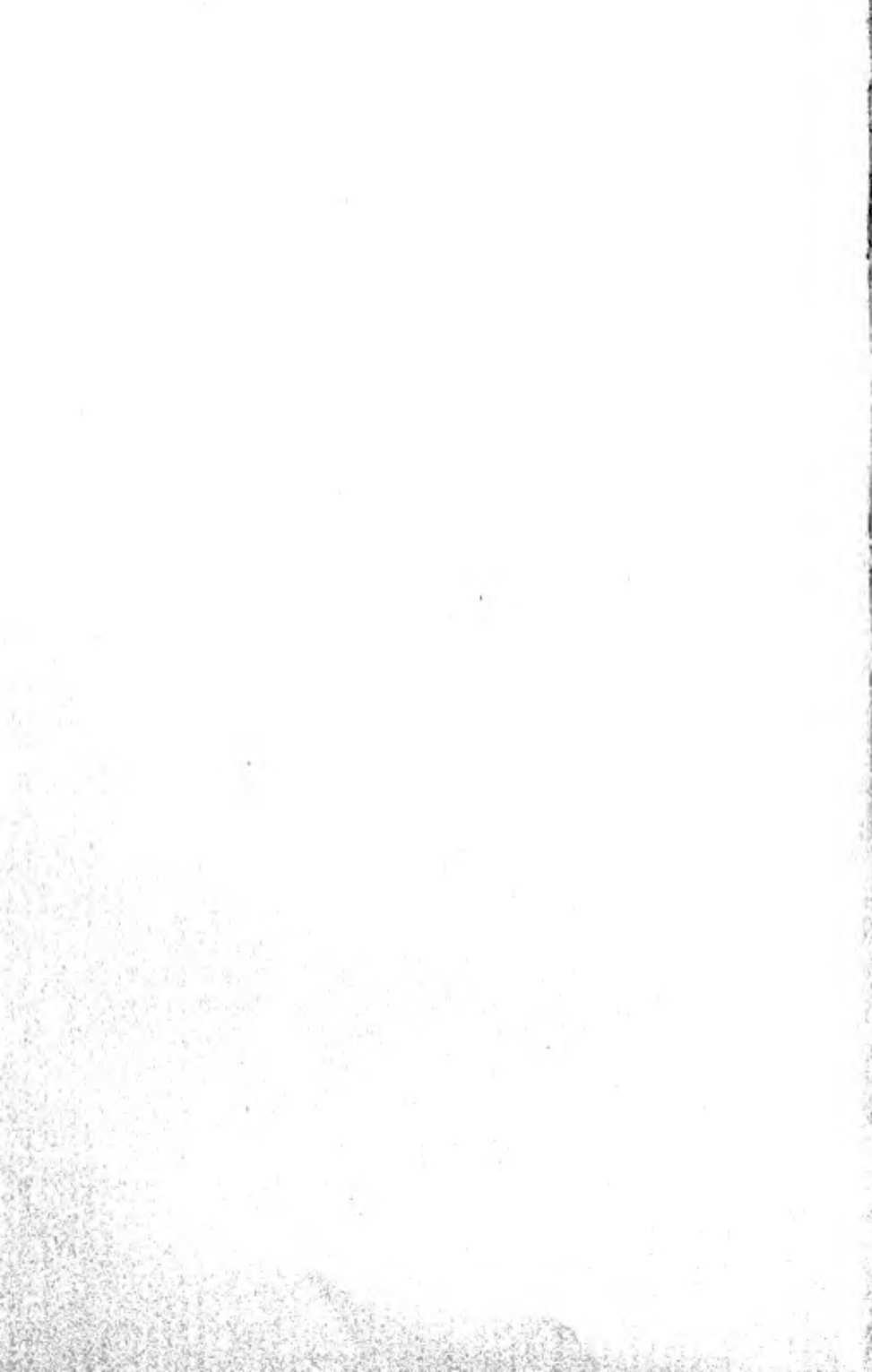
PREFACE

intelligence and enthusiasm. Thanks to her I still treasure the copy of the letter which I appear to have written to Professor Sidorov in impeccable Russian. The second is George Adam of *Le Figaro Littéraire*. If the wood of a story has emerged at all from a jungle of facts, it is his *clarté cartésienne*—and his blue-pencil—which are responsible.

DESMOND YOUNG

PART ONE

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE



I

A Round Voyage

"*My past seems like a dream. . .*" It was with these words that a distinguished old gentleman, living in retirement in the 1820's at his château near Chambéry, would smilingly evade questions about his career. Count Benoît de Boigne, Lieutenant-General in the Army of King Victor Emmanuel of Sardinia, *Maréchal de Camp* in the army of King Louis XVIII of France, Knight of the Legion of Honour and of the Order of St. Louis, Knight of the Grand Cross of St. Maurice and St. Lazarus, Councillor of State, former President of the Council-General of the Department of Mont Blanc, was not a communicative man, as visitors found out.

But if the visitor were a British officer who had seen service in India, it was surprising how quickly the old soldier recovered his memory. Sometimes, indeed, if the magic name of "Merta" were mentioned, "the blood would mount to his temples and the old fire come into his eyes as he recalled, with inconceivable rapidity and eloquence, the story of that glorious day," the day when, under the white cross of Savoy, he formed his infantry into a hollow square, beat off attack after furious attack by the famous Rathor cavalry and then advancing, foot and guns,

drove the enemy from the field in confusion. It was the day that he broke the power of the Rajputs. "*Yet he spoke always as though he were describing the adventures of another.*"

Two such British visitors were especially welcome. One was James Grant Duff, of the Bombay Grenadiers, who published in 1826 what is still the standard history of the Mahrattas. It was in the Mahratta service that de Boigne rose to fame and fortune and Grant Duff was anxious to include in his book a first-hand account of his exploits. The other was Colonel Tod who, in his *Annals of Rajasthan*, recalled the former glories of the Rajputs.

In such company de Boigne would talk freely as they sat by the fire in the library or, followed by his Indian major-domo, strolled down the great double avenue of plane trees which forms the approach to Buisson Rond. Though over seventy, he was still as straight as the trees and a magnificent figure of a man. No one could take him for anything but a general out at grass but, wrote Tod, he was "mild and unassuming, unostentatious in habit and demeanour and preserved all the gallantry and politeness of the *vieille cour*."

It would doubtless have surprised Colonel Tod to learn that, in spite of his gracious manners and aristocratic name, General Count Benoît de Boigne was, in fact, born at Chambéry on March 8th, 1751, plain Benoît Leborgne, third son of Jean Baptiste Leborgne, hide-and-skin merchant, glover and furrier, and of his wife, the former Hélène Gabet. She came from a long line of notaries and was thought to have married beneath her but she was also of bourgeois stock. The father, himself the son of a grocer, had his shop in the Place St. Léger.

Nevertheless, though de Boigne was enough of a snob to embellish his name and on one occasion concealed his

humble origin with disastrous results, he was not in the end ashamed of it. He returned at last to live and die in the one place where everyone knew who he was and all about the decent but undistinguished family from which he sprang. That, however, was after he had had a surfeit of snobbery.

* * *

To the impatient motorist, bound for Lyons or Grenoble or Geneva or Turin, to the American visitor from Aix-les-Bains, anxious to make a pilgrimage to Les Charmettes, where Jean-Jacques Rousseau passed idyllic days with Madame de Warens, Chambéry must seem no more than a bustling, prosperous, provincial town. As they struggle through its crowded streets they may reflect that its architects have an unfortunate predilection for reinforced concrete. But leave the main thoroughfares, abandon the car, plunge into the first dark, vaulted passage, beneath fifteenth century houses of crumbling stone, whose steel-coloured, pointed roofs make a tangled pattern against the limpid sky. Before you emerge somewhere near the palace of the Dukes of Savoy you will have walked back into the Middle Ages, into one of those little towns compressed into a capital letter in an illuminated Book of Hours.

When Jean-Jacques Rousseau lived and taught music in Chambéry in the 1730's he found it the most agreeable little town in the world. Nowhere else was life so sweet and gay. The people were the best and most sociable he ever knew. The women were all beautiful. Amongst the young girls who were his pupils there was not one, he declared in his *Confessions*, who was not charming. Their mothers received him into their houses: the Comtesse de Methon

several times had him to dine. The Comte de Bellegarde, his brother the Comte de Nangis, the Comte de Lautrec, the young Marquis de Sennecterre, were interested in him and his music. Meanwhile his *chère maman*, Madame de Warens, had seduced him and in other ways, too, had taken his education in hand. All was *couleur de rose*.

Not long after Rousseau left, there followed six years of Spanish occupation. Under it the people of Savoy suffered so terribly that the occupation is still a legend. When Benoît Leborgne was born in 1751, the nightmare was over and Savoy was at the beginning of twenty-five years of peace and prosperity.

Yet something of the former light-heartedness had gone. Charles Emmanuel III, King of Sardinia and ruler of Savoy, was an autocrat, respected rather than loved. "A king who commands, a nobility which supports him, a people who obey"—such was his creed. The nobility supported him perforce but privately referred to him as "the Italian artichoke," for physically he was no more impressive than his descendant, the Victor Emmanuel of our own time. The king, for his part, kept a close watch on the behaviour of all his subjects and personally supervised both the Judiciary and the Church. It was a benevolent police state, with little room for individual liberty.

In such an atmosphere young Leborgne was brought up. His father was prosperous, for his furs and gloves were fashionable. He was acquainted with the local nobility and gentry across the counter. The bourgeois society in which he and his family moved was, by all accounts, both gayer and less narrow than that of small provincial towns in France to-day. His son went, like everyone else, to the

Royal College and was given a sound classical education by the priests.

He was a tall, good-looking, powerfully-built boy who early showed an aptitude for fencing, for music and for languages. But while music could open the doors of aristocratic houses to Rousseau, arriving from nowhere, there was no question of its doing so to the son of a local shopkeeper. There were only two avenues by which a young man of parts could escape from his class, if a religious life did not appeal to him. One was the Law and the other the profession of arms.

Benoît Leborgne did well at the College and gave proof of an intelligence much above the average. He was kept there later than most tradesmen's sons and, his father having died when he was fourteen, it was natural that his mother should wish to restore him to her own station in life by making him a lawyer. This ambition, hers rather than his, came to an abrupt end. Young Leborgne found himself in trouble with the police for smashing lanterns in the Place de Lans after midnight, breaking a statue with his stick and assaulting the watch.

According to Stendhal, who lived in Chambéry for a time, though much later, his mother sent him to France to wait until his misbehaviour should be forgotten. Thence, says Stendhal, he returned to fight a duel with a Piedmontese officer who had insulted his elder brother and, having severely wounded him, was expelled from Savoy.

Be that as it may, Chambéry was no place for a high-spirited young man. All Savoyards have "*un gout de l'imprévu et du nouveau*," a taste for novelty and a love of travel. And when Joseph de Maistre, who was to become, with Edmund Burke, the intellectual adversary of the French

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revolution and Savoy's most famous writer, returned at twenty from studying law in Turin, he complained of "the endless burden of doing nothing" in Chambéry.

By that time Benoît Leborgne had already left. Before his eighteenth birthday, whether by enlistment or, as seems more probable, by purchase, he was an ensign in the Clare Regiment of the Irish Brigade in the French Army. His mother could console herself with the thought that her son had already taken a step upwards socially, since commissions in the army of Sardinia were reserved for those of noble birth. As for Benoît de Boigne (it was then that he ceased to call himself Leborgne), he had found his trade.

II

Prisoner of the Turks

THE REGIMENT of Clare, which had been raised for the service of King James by Daniel O'Brien, third Viscount Clare, early in 1689, was lying at Landrecies when de Boigne joined it. Already over six feet in height and broad-shouldered in proportion, he must have looked striking in his scarlet coat, with green and yellow facings (the O'Brien colours), yellow plastron and cuffs, the coat-tails turned back with green, and white breeches and gaiters, with dark garters outside the gaiters. "The hat is most picturesque and becoming," wrote a young Irish brother-officer, "a small three-cornered beaver, bearing the famous white cockade and bound with silver. Silver epaulettes, a gilt gorget with a silver star and falling lace ruffles add great elegance to the dress. The officer is armed with both sword and musket, the latter small, short and furnished with a short bayonet."

The whole Irish Brigade was, in fact, renowned throughout Europe for its smart appearance, its strict discipline and its good manners, as well as for its gallantry in the field. Colonel Meade commanded the Clare Regiment; its boy colonel, young Lord Clare, son of the veteran of Fontenoy,

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Marshal Thomond, was still being educated and did not join as an ensign until five years later.

De Boigne spent three years with the regiment at Landrecies, that little town which the 3rd Coldstream were to make famous in World War I during the retreat from Mons. He later impressed everyone who met him as a first-class officer, with a high standard of professional knowledge, and was said to be "extremely polite, affable, pleasant, humorous and vivacious, and elegant in his manners." The Clare Regiment knew how to make the most of its officer material.

For this the credit must go, as always, to the Adjutant or Aide-Major, Daniel Charles O'Connell, afterwards Count O'Connell and uncle of Daniel O'Connell, "the Liberator." O'Connell was only twenty-four, six years de Boigne's senior, and joined about the same time from the Royal Suédois Regiment, with which he had already seen service. As he had been at the Military Academy at Strasbourg and was described as "the best behaved and most brilliant young man I have ever met," Colonel Meade at once selected him as his adjutant.

There was a marked similarity between de Boigne and O'Connell, for both were unusually tall, strong and handsome and both were good horsemen. They were alike, too, throughout their long lives, in that they were both abstemious in an age when so many men habitually drank to excess and that neither of them ever fell a victim to the eighteenth century passion for high play. It was natural that they should become friends, and the friendship survived a separation of thirty years.

At the end of 1770 the regiment was ordered abroad, its destination the East Indies. In June, 1771, after a six months'

voyage, it came, via the Cape of Good Hope, to Mauritius, the Ile de France.

"This is how I see the East . . . a high outline of mountains, blue and afar in the morning; like faint mist at noon; a jagged wall of purple at sunset. I see a bay, a wide bay smooth as glass and polished like ice, shimmering in the dark. A red light burns far off upon the gloom of the land and the night is soft and warm. Suddenly a puff of wind, a puff faint and tepid and laden with strange odours of blossoms, or aromatic wood, comes out of the still night—the first sigh of the East on my face. That I can never forget. It was impalpable and enslaving, like a charm, like a whispered promise of mysterious delight . . . For me all the East is contained in that vision of my youth." So wrote Conrad and it is not difficult for anyone who remembers his own first landfall in the tropics to recapture the mood of romantic expectancy in which a young soldier, until that voyage a stranger to the sea, must have watched the transports glide under topsails to their anchorage in the roadstead of Port Louis.

Reality was less romantic. Provisions for the troops were very scarce; there was no money at all to pay them. War, with prospects of plunder, alone could have improved their lot; in peace it could not have been worse.

After nearly two years abroad the regiment returned to France, de Boigne with it. They disembarked at Lorient and marched endless miles through the mud to Béthune, where they were to form part of the garrison. Béthune can never have been a very gay town. Nor were the prospects of the regiment much brighter than the gloomy skies of Northern France and Flanders. The Minister of War paid no attention to merit or military capacity: in

peace-time seniority alone led to advancement. In September, 1773, they were ordered to Rocroy in Champagne, one of the worst stations in France.

Unfortunately both Colonel Meade and young Lord Clare died in the winter of 1774. With the death of the latter, the regiment that bore his name ceased to exist and was incorporated into the Irish regiment of Berwick, under the Marquis of FitzJames. The end was seen to be inevitable before it came, for the young man's illness was incurable. FitzJames would naturally prefer his own officers. Already in the summer O'Connell had written to his brother in Ireland: "If our dissolution should take place while the war holds between Russia and the Turks, I am resolved to try how far Fortune may be favourable to me amongst them. . . ."

The idea of entering the Russian service, in which other Irishmen had brilliantly distinguished themselves, had long been discussed in the Mess. But whereas O'Connell and the others only talked about it over their wine, de Boigne, who meanwhile had learned to speak, read and write English fluently, though not without mistakes, was enterprising enough to put it into practice. Before the regiment of Clare was merged with that of Berwick and even before the move from Béthune, he decided that there was no future for him as a subaltern in the Irish Brigade. Resigning his commission and making his way via Chambéry to Turin, he secured from the Marquis d'Aigueblanche, the Sardinian Minister and himself a Savoyard, a letter of recommendation to Admiral Count Alexis Orlov, then commanding the Russian forces in the Eastern Mediterranean.

This was such an introduction as could make a young man's fortune. Alexis Orlov had recently deserved well of

the Empress Catherine. Appointed Grand Admiral of the Fleet, though he had never set foot on the deck of a man-of-war, he had succeeded, with the skilled assistance of a couple of British flag-officers, in virtually annihilating the Turkish fleet off Chios, in the summer of 1770. Now, three years later, hostilities having flared up again, he was engaged in subduing the islands of the Greek Archipelago.

When de Boigne reported to him, his headquarters were at Paros. How de Boigne made his way from Turin to the Cyclades we have no means of knowing. But we can picture the man to whom he presented his letter of introduction. For all the Orlov brothers, and there were five of them, were of the same mould. They were all muscular and handsome; all of them, though their grandfather had been only a ranker, were officers in the Guards; all of them were popular with their brother-officers and idolised by their men as much for their vices as their virtues. They were daring to the point of foolhardiness, of cheerful disposition; genial with their friends, unrestrained in their passions, heavy drinkers, gamblers, lovers, and confirmed fatalists. They were impulsive, greedy but not calculating, immensely generous and entirely uneducated. "Like cats, they seemed to be perpetually balancing on the edge of some precipice. . . ." They were irresistible to women and fascinating to men.

Alexis was only half as handsome as his brothers, for although the right side of his face was "fair as an angel's", the left, as the result of a sabre cut which had healed badly, had the lip dragged up into a perpetual grin. He prided himself on his terrifying appearance and in courage and recklessness was the equal of the rest. Of them all, he was the best athlete. His temper was as violent as theirs

and he knocked out the eye of the great Potemkin in an argument over a friendly game of billiards.

Nor was it only in the Mediterranean that Alexis had rendered his mistress a service. Two grubby and incoherent letters, found amongst Catherine's papers after her death, make it almost certain that it was his hands which strangled her husband, the wretched Peter III, and made an obscure German princess the all-powerful ruler of the greatest empire in Europe.

De Boigne had met many tough, swashbuckling soldiers in the Irish Brigade ; he can never have encountered one as formidable as Admiral Alexis Orlov, now aged thirty-six. His own physique, his skill at arms and his record in a first-class regiment were a better passport than any letter of introduction: he was at once accepted as a captain in the Russian army and set to training Greek levies. With any luck, he might have gone far in the service of Catherine the Great, especially if he had come to the notice of the Empress, for he had qualities in which most of her Russian favourites were sadly deficient. In appearance he was the type of man she admired, handsome, dashing and virile; he was unusual in possessing what Russians like the Orlovs (but not their German ruler), despised—the solid bourgeois virtues of industry, integrity, sobriety and thrift, combined with a marked aptitude for administration.

These characteristics he was to exhibit as soon as the opportunity offered; meanwhile he was the victim of the worst misfortune that can befall an ambitious young soldier. In his very first action, an "indiscreet descent" on the island of Tenedos (now Bozcaada), at the approaches to the Dardanelles, he was, during a sally by the garrison, made a prisoner of the Turks and carried off to a prison

camp on Chios, a hundred miles to the south. From Russian sources we know that Admiral Yelmanov was raiding the approaches to the Dardanelles in May, 1774; it is probable that de Boigne was captured while making a preliminary "recce" for these raids.

Prisoners-of-war were not instantly released at the end of hostilities in July. In 1775 there were still many Russian officers hanging about Constantinople, awaiting the arrival of the Russian Ambassador with money and orders. Foreign recruits fared worse. The British Ambassador at the Porte wrote in August, 1774, that "the Austrian volunteers have left the Russian camp much discontented." Next month he wrote that "the Russian Admiral has discharged the Albanese without giving them money: it is feared that they will turn pirate." Discharges continued throughout 1775 and references to acts of piracy recur in the Ambassador's dispatches.

De Boigne was more fortunate. We have his word for it that, while a prisoner on Chios, he made the acquaintance of Lord Algernon Percy, then cruising in the Mediterranean, that Lord Algernon rendered him "an essential service" and that it was to him that he owed his release. The story is curiously confirmed. The present Duke of Northumberland, who was good enough to make a search amongst the papers at Alnwick, discovered the Journal of Lord Algernon Percy's cruise in his yacht. This is mainly a sailing-log of wind and weather and position and makes no mention of de Boigne. But it shows that the yacht was lying off Chios on November 9th, 1774.

The two young men were of an age—twenty-three. They certainly met about this time and it is probable that the English nobleman, making the Grand Tour in the style

FOUNTAIN OF THE ELEPHANTS

befitting his rank and unperturbed by travelling through what was so recently a war-zone, went out of his way to be of service to a prisoner who was an officer and, to all appearances, a gentleman. Such courtesies were common enough in an age when, in spite of the difficulties of travel, society was more cosmopolitan than it is to-day. Lord Algernon's influence may have been enough. But because the release of officer prisoners was often expedited, as in the Middle Ages, if they were able to pay for it and their detention indefinitely prolonged if they were not, the "essential service" may well have been to discount de Boigne's bill, drawn on his family in Chambéry.

This would explain a later report that he was "redeemed by his parents." It disposes of a more picturesque story, afterwards circulated in India, that he was taken to Constantinople, there sold as a slave for fifty dollars and employed in carrying water from the Hellespont to his master's house.

At any rate we know that de Boigne emerged from captivity at the hands of the Turk towards the end of the year 1774. And this brings us to one of the puzzling chapters in his life.

III

Three Missing Years

THE TURKS released de Boigne towards the end of 1774. Three years later, during the autumn of 1777, we find him shipwrecked off Alexandria, swimming ashore from a small Cypriot coasting craft and starting on the next stage of his adventures in nothing but what he stood up in. Where was he and what did he do during these three years?

At first sight the story seems simple enough, for de Boigne himself told it twice, at an interval of thirty years, and de Boigne was a veracious man with a remarkably retentive memory for his dream-like past. But although he always—or nearly always—told the truth, he did not always tell the whole truth. In this instance the chronology suggests that he held something back.

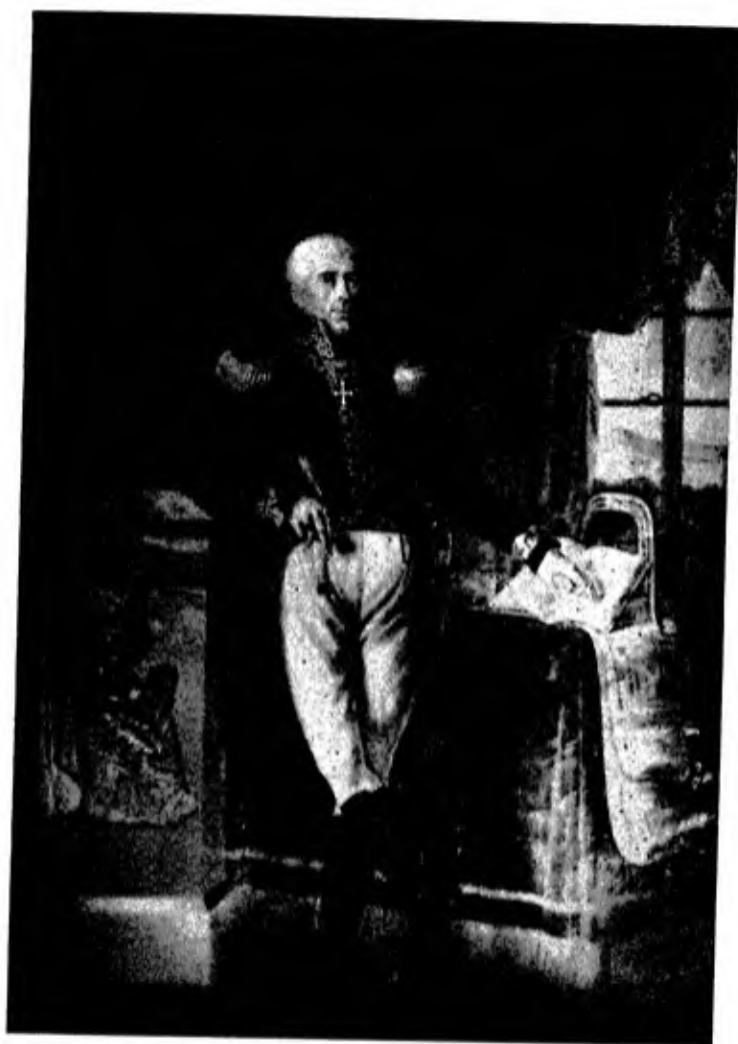
To a young Englishman in Government service who visited him in India much later, he merely said that "upon recovering his liberty he determined to set out for India, a country he had a great desire to see, and proceeding by Suez and the Red Sea, reached Bombay and subsequently Madras. . . ." To Grant Duff, his guest in his old age, he was more explicit and Grant Duff, like the young Government servant, promptly made a note of what he was told.

FOUNTAIN OF THE ELEPHANTS

Having described how de Boigne was taken prisoner, carried off to Chios and freed after the Peace of Kutchuk Kainardji, Grant Duff writes: "On being released, he embarked for Smyrna, at which place, happening to meet some Englishmen from India, he was so struck with their account of the country that he resolved on trying his fortune there. He proceeded to Constantinople and thence to Aleppo, where he joined a caravan for Baghdad; but in consequence of the successes of the Persians against the Turks, the caravan, after they had arrived near Baghdad, being under an apprehension of falling into the hands of the victors, retraced their steps to Aleppo. De Boigne, baulked in his endeavours of getting to India by that route, repaired to Grand Cairo, where he became acquainted with Mr. Baldwin, the British Consul-General, and through his influence and kindness obtained a passage to Madras. . . ."

This is all plausible enough and doubtless accurate as far as it goes. De Boigne could only collect his arrears of pay and resign his Russian commission in Constantinople; there is nothing improbable in his decision to try the overland route from Constantinople to India via Aleppo and Baghdad. Presumably he intended to follow the caravan route to Kermanshah and Tehran, strike into Afghanistan by the Herat Pass, push on to Kabul and enter the promised land, as so many invaders have done, by way of the Khyber and Peshawar.

The Turks and the Persians were at war and this was a daring project for an ex-prisoner whose service with the Russian army would hardly commend him to either side. Having driven "single car" across the Syrian Desert in the summer of 1941, just after the capitulation of the Vichy French, I admire de Boigne's enterprise. For although we



BENOÎT DE BOIGNE



D. O'Connell

DANIEL O'CONNELL

THREE MISSING YEARS

were well-armed and in the comparative comfort of a Ford station-wagon, the heat was blinding, the going rough, the country unsettled, the rare inhabitants not noticeably friendly. As we drove at speed round the occasional villages near the Turkish frontier, "seen-off" by packs of hostile and apparently man-eating collies, or later, as we were ferried in much too small a punt across the swift-running Euphrates at midnight, I would not claim that my companion and I were entirely at ease.

Nearly two hundred years earlier, with the addition of Turkish Bashi-bazouks, "notorious for their lawlessness and savage brutality," ready to pounce upon the slow-moving caravans, the journey must have been much more formidable. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the track across the desert from Damascus to Baghdad was known as "the Road of Death," from the absence of wells and the presence of bandits, and in 1859 the Druses and Kurds massacred Christians in Beirut and Damascus. In 1925 the French had to fight a major war against the Druses (was not General Gamelin's title to military fame that he was "the victor of Kissoué"?) and even after the last war Nairn Transport had its difficulties.

Nevertheless from Aleppo to Mosul is only 300-odd miles as the crow flies and from Mosul to Baghdad about a hundred miles less. Make every allowance for the stay at Smyrna, for the visit to Constantinople, for the fruitless journey from Aleppo to Baghdad and back, with inevitable delays *en route*, and we still cannot account for more than one of the three missing years. What was de Boigne doing in the Middle East during the other two? He has left us no clue and his reticence was maintained until his death.

Is there any explanation? According to two articles

IV

Ensign in Madras

DE BOIGNE had saved his life from the wreck but he had saved nothing else. Like so many soldiers in the Middle East in more recent times, he had lost all his kit. Unlike them, he had no unit or "Base Details" to which to report. He was a mercenary without employment, a stranger in a strange and inhospitable land and *le Grand Caire* was still a long way off.

It was fortunate for him that at Alexandria he fell in with Mr. George Baldwin. Baldwin, later Consul-General in Cairo, was in the service of the East India Company, organising trade between India, Egypt and England. He was a kindly man. More important, he had met Lord Algernon Percy when his yacht called at Alexandria. Anyone who had already been befriended by the brother of the Duke of Northumberland was one whom a British official in the eighteenth century would be naturally disposed to oblige—even had he not been "polite, affable and elegant in his manners."

Baldwin was, in fact, very good to de Boigne. Not only did he arrange a passage for him from Suez to Madras; he also supplied him with a letter of introduction to Major

Sydenham, Town Major of Fort St. George. Here, after a call at Bombay, he arrived in January, 1778.

* * *

De Boigne landed at last in India "possessing nothing but his courage." He found himself plunged into a society where, as in a mining-camp in a gold rush, everyone was quite frankly and single-mindedly "on the make." The Company's servants, not being under the immediate eye of the Governor-General, were "in every way baser, as well as more venal, than those of Calcutta." The atmosphere of Madras was described as "pestilential," an adjective which the Oxford History of India accepts as "felicitously exact."

As in a mining-camp, life was correspondingly expensive, though not on quite the same scale as in Calcutta, where William Hickey, with a modest establishment, kept sixty-three servants, where Sir Philip Francis paid £1200 a year rent for his house and where a Member of the Council is said to have lost £40,000 at a single sitting at whist.

In flowered silks and brocades the men would sit down, in the hottest part of the day, to an eight-course dinner, washed down with "Mountain wine, Rhenish Syder, Galicia, Florence, Hock, Canary and Skyrash wine" and, on the advice of the local doctors, would fortify themselves against fever with copious draughts of port. (Their grave-stones may still be seen and it is surprising—or perhaps not surprising—how many of them died in their twenties and early thirties. Amongst them lies the doctor whose sovereign specific against fever was "plenty of roast beef" and who dropped dead after a hearty meal of it.)

The women had nearly all come out in the hope of

catching a rich "Nabob" from amongst the English merchants and officials. In spite of the damp heat, against which they protected themselves with Venus Bloom and Hungary Water, they dressed with a degree of ostentation which astonished new arrivals from London, itself grossly overdressed in the eyes of the French. The more fashionable of them prided themselves on importing "the latest from Paris," though some of the startling creations were no doubt, as always, run up by the *dherzi*, or Indian tailor, on the back veranda.

Having slept off their dinners in rooms protected by *khaskhastatties*, grass screens against which water would from time to time be thrown by some of the innumerable Indian servants, they would all dress again for a late afternoon drive along the sea-front, to greet their friends, to see and be seen and to catch the sea-breezes. In the evening they would again eat and, above all, drink immoderately, gossip, dance and quarrel (for in such a climate on such a diet tempers were short and duels frequent); and so, in the case of the more respectable, to bed. For others, more doubtful amusements were available and a few years later a complaint was made that even the patients in the Presidency Hospital would "form parties, often with the sergeant of the guard, to go into the Black Town (the Indian city), where they generally remain during the greater part of the night, committing every act of enormity."

Entry into such a raffish society should not have been too difficult for a handsome young man like de Boigne, with all the social graces, including a talent for music. But, apart from lack of money, he was under a major disability. Though not in fact a Frenchman but a Savoyard and a subject of the King of Sardinia, he was a foreigner

who spoke French as his first language and had served in the French army. The merchants of Madras and the Company's officers had not yet forgotten the humiliating circumstances in which, thirty-eight years before, the city and Fort St. George had been unconditionally handed over to the French under La Bourdonnais and all the English made prisoners. The French were the traditional enemy and, to make matters worse, within a few months of de Boigne's arrival in Madras, England and France were again at war. He could not have chosen a more unfortunate moment to seek his fortune in India.

For a time he supported himself by giving fencing lessons. But he was under a cloud of suspicion, as will be seen. Perhaps from a desire to dissipate this cloud and to make clear which side he was on, perhaps from sheer necessity, he fell back upon the one trade in which he was competent to earn a living. In July, 1778, thanks to the intervention of Major Sydenham, the Town Major, with the new Governor, Sir Thomas Rumbold, he was commissioned as an ensign in the 6th Regiment of Madras Infantry, in the service of the Honourable East India Company.

This at least gave him "protection" and an assured status. Yet to one who, ten years before, had been an ensign in the famous regiment of Clare and who, quite recently, was a captain in the more savage but still reputable army of Catherine the Great, it can hardly have seemed a very brilliant beginning. Already rising twenty-eight, he was now an ensign again and rather an elderly one, serving with sepoys under a foreign flag, in the employ of a commercial corporation.

De Boigne could not have spent six months in Madras without meeting captains and even subalterns in the

Company's service much older than himself, with little hope of promotion and no possibility of making ends meet on their pay. As late as 1787, nine years after he was commissioned, subalterns were still trying to live on 95 rupees (about £12) a month—and this at a time when a seat in the pit of a theatre cost £1, when a doctor's minimum charge was £2, when imported cheese and ham were 12/6 a pound and a fashionable hairdresser charged 16/- for cutting a gentleman's hair.

In that year the *Calcutta Telegraph* published a pathetic ballad entitled "Ninety-five":

*I am a younger son of Mars and spend my time in carving
A thousand different ways and means to keep myself from starving
For how, with servants' wages, Sir, and clothes can I contrive
To rent a house and feed myself on scanty ninety-five?*

*Six mornings out of seven, I lie in bed to save
The only coat my pride can boast, the Service ever gave;
And as for eating twice a day, as heretofore, I strive
To measure out my frugal meal by scanty ninety-five.*

*Alack! that e'er I left my friends, to seek my fortune here
And gave my solid pudding up for such uncertain fare;
Oh! had I chose the better way and staid at home to thrive,
I had not known what 'tis to live on scanty ninety-five.*

Only the desirability, even in a hot climate, of eating at least once a day can have driven de Boigne to sink his rank and his pride and enter so ill-paid a service. In moments of depression, he doubtless looked back with regret to the solid comfort of his mother's house at Chambéry and to the Mess of the Clare Regiment. On the other hand, like

most ex-prisoners of war, he could reflect that he was at any rate better off than in the hands of the Turks.

Moreover, "a bloody war and quick promotion" was, as ever, the soldier's toast and a bloody war was threatening southern India and was soon to beat against the very walls of Madras. In July, 1780, two years after de Boigne joined his regiment, the storm broke when Hyder Ali, ruler of Mysore, unleashed his hordes upon the plains of the Carnatic. "Those who were able to evade this tempest fled to the walled cities"; wrote Burke in a famous passage, "but escaping from fire, sword and exile, they fell into the jaws of famine. . . ."

De Boigne evaded, if not the tempest, at least the worst of its effects, by a piece of singular good fortune. His regiment, under Colonel Baillie, was surrounded by the hordes of Hyder Ali, some thirty miles from Madras. A relieving force under Sir Hector Munro was only about two miles away when it panicked, abandoned its guns and stores, and fled to the city. The regiment was overwhelmed and the few survivors of the slaughter which followed were led off into a captivity incomparably more horrible than imprisonment by the Turks. But de Boigne was away on detachment, in charge of the guard over a convoy carrying grain to the famine-stricken inhabitants of Madras.

Though the massacre was avenged on the site of it by Sir Eyre Coote and Hyder Ali died at the end of 1782, the war dragged on until it was temporarily halted in 1784 by an uneasy truce with his son and successor, Tipu, the famous or infamous "Tiger of Mysore." But de Boigne does not appear to have played any further part in it and, early in 1782, was allowed to resign his commission.

There is some evidence that he was court-martialled for

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"taking undue liberties with the wife of a brother officer" but was "honourably acquitted." It was generally believed that he had thrown up his commission in a huff because he had been passed over for promotion to adjutant. There has, however, come to light the official and hitherto unpublished copy of the letter in which he acknowledges permission to resign.

Written from Fort St. George on April 9th, 1782, it is addressed to Lord Macartney, who had succeeded as Governor the now affluent Sir Thomas Rumbold.¹ The letter is worth quoting in full. It shows de Boigne's command of English. It throws light on the suspicion current about him as a supposed sympathiser with the French. It explains his retirement from the service. Moreover, it bears directly on the Russian mystery.

Fort St. George
April 9th, 1782

My Lord,

I have had the honour to receive the permission of your Lordship and the Select Committee to resign the Service and the favour of your promise to obtain for me from the Supreme Council at Bengal a pass to return to Europe by the way of Delhi and the Caspian Sea, my intention being to re-enter into the Russian Service, in which I have Friends and Prospects. I beg leave to assure your Lordship that these are the sole motives of my quitting the Service of the Hon'ble Company in the present time and not with a view to serve with the

¹The ex-waiter from White's amassed so much money so quickly and by such doubtful means that a bill of confiscation was introduced into Parliament to deprive him of it.

French, as some bad-intentioned men may suppose. I am not of that Nation, nor inclined towards them, having always had the most perfect attachment to the English Government and proposing myself to be for ever in the same opinion.

I must avow to your Lordship, upon a strict examination of my conduct since I have had the honour to be admitted into the Service, I have not found myself deserving the second letter directed to me by the Hon'ble Board. I hope, my Lord, you will be so just to me as to believe me incapable of so ungenerous sentiments as to do anything contrary to the welfare and prosperity of the Hon'ble Company, all my vows being for their success and yours.

I am, with great Respect, my Lord,

Your most obedient

Humble Servant

Bt. de Boigne

The "second letter from the Board" is untraceable but it evidently cast doubts on de Boigne's motives in wishing to retire and suggested that he might be proposing to join the French. Such suspicions must have been removed and his assurance of loyalty accepted for a month later, on May 5th, 1782, Lord Macartney gave him a personal letter of introduction to Sir John Macpherson, senior Member of Council in Calcutta, former ship's purser and *ex officio* confidant of Warren Hastings.

"This letter will be delivered to you," it runs, "by Mr. de Boigne, an Officer formerly in the Russian Service, to which he is now returning. He has been in ours for some time past, but seeing little prospect of rising has

desired leave some months since to resign, which we have now granted him. His intention is to proceed to Delhi and Lahore and to endeavour to get in to Russia by a new Route. You will please to furnish him with any Passports which you may imagine may be of use to him in this undertaking, which will oblige etc. etc. Macartney."

It is clear that, if de Boigne had come to India because "it was a country which I had a great desire to see," he had kept at the back of his mind his project of surveying an overland route from India to Russia. It is also clear that he had not been allowed to resign his commission in the East India Company without inquiry. Lord Macartney's letter proves that the Governor had taken a personal interest in his case—and in his plans. Macartney had been Envoy Extraordinary to the Empress Catherine in 1764, had negotiated a commercial treaty with Russia, had been in high favour at Court, had been presented by the Empress with a superb snuff-box studded with diamonds. Out of mere human curiosity he would naturally question de Boigne about his "Friends and Prospects" in Petersburg. Who were, in fact, those friends and what were those prospects? We do not know. Yet de Boigne must have satisfied Lord Macartney that they existed and that his daring project was not impracticable. He was soon to find that the mention of it opened to him the doors of a more powerful person.

V

The Road to Russia

WHEN de Boigne arrived in Calcutta in the early summer of 1782, Lord Macartney's letter procured him an interview with Sir John Macpherson. In turn the ex-purser, an incompetent rascal but a good-humoured fellow, known as "the genial giant," arranged an audience with the Governor-General. Like the introduction to Admiral Orlov, this was a favour that could change a man's fortune. Warren Hastings was the greatest figure in India. To those outside his Council his authority seemed absolute, his powers of preferment unlimited. Had he not appointed young Markham, son of the Archbishop of Canterbury, to be Resident of Benares at twenty-one and was not Markham reputed to be making £30,000 a year in bribes?

A first interview with a Viceroy is somewhat unnerving for a man, particularly if his future depends upon it. Hastings had simple tastes and cared little for ceremonial. Still, those long, lofty, echoing corridors of Government House . . . the cathedral gloom, with the shutters closed against the merciless sun . . . the ranks of *chaprassis* in scarlet and gold, rising to their feet and shrewdly appraising the visitor to the *Lat Sahib*. . . the hushed voices . . . the deferential tap on the mahogany door. As de Boigne

squared his shoulders and pulled down his belt before being ushered into the Presence he knew that everything hung on the impression he might make. Could he hold the great man's attention or would he be dismissed after a few minutes, with perhaps a polite invitation to dinner, just another accredited bird of passage?

In one respect he was more fortunate than he knew. Unlike Clive, who once stared coldly at a newcomer with introductions and peremptorily asked: "Well, how much will you take?" Warren Hastings was renowned for his "acts of politeness and readiness to relieve and protect everyone alike." Moreover, he had known what it was to be thirty-one and hard-up and out of a job. At the same age, after four years of unemployment in London, he had had to borrow the money for his kit before he could return to India.

That apart, de Boigne had more than his soldierly carriage and magnificent physique to recommend him to the Governor-General. Though not the equal in scholarship of one who had been known at Westminster as "the classical boy" and who still found time to make translations from the Latin and Greek, he had had a sound classical education and had not forgotten his Latin. Perfect French and polished manners were a passport to Mrs. Hastings. For the former Baroness Imhoff, then in the flower of her beauty, found difficulty with her English, preferring, to the day of her death—and she lived to be ninety—to speak French or German when possible. She also disliked the dull, drunken, purse-proud society of Calcutta and was equally disliked and envied by the scandal-mongering *memsahibs*. Any gentleman from Europe was a welcome change.

Moreover, Warren Hastings had a great taste for travel

and adventure, even at second-hand, and de Boigne had crowded plenty of both into his thirty-one years, though with little profit to himself. Both, too, were enthusiastic horsemen, and horsemanship has enabled many foreigners to surmount obstacles in English society.

The civility of the Governor-General is explained. Yet what was there about de Boigne, a foreigner of no identifiable family, the house of "de Boigne" being his own creation, an unsuccessful adventurer, an ex-officer of subaltern rank who had already changed his coat three times and was anxious to change it again, which aroused the interest of Warren Hastings, the most powerful but also the most harassed and preoccupied man in India? How could the Governor-General find time to look into the affairs of this young stranger, when he was at a crisis of his own fortune, bitterly attacked by Edmund Burke and Philip Francis in England, rightly suspecting the intrigues of false friends in India, among them both Macartney and Macpherson?

We know that he did so. In his old age de Boigne spoke to Grant Duff of his "kindly reception" by Warren Hastings. The clue lies in a casual remark that he dropped much earlier, to the attentive young visitor in India. "He spoke with much gratitude of the assistance and protection which Mr. Hastings afforded to *his project*. . . ."

The operative word is "project"—the project for reconnoitring a new route between India and Russia. De Boigne had not come to Hastings in search of a sinecure; he had presented himself with a carefully worked-out plan and a bold one.

At first sight there would seem to be no reason why Warren Hastings should look upon such a project with favour and every reason for him to regard it with suspicion.

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Russia was, indeed, always a potential ally of England against her hereditary enemy, France. But so far as India was concerned she was always to be feared as a potential enemy herself. Not many years were to pass before she had become the bugbear, the hobgoblin in the form of a bear, which was to haunt the Government of India for generations and must still cause disquietude to the present incumbents and their neighbours in Pakistan.

Among Hastings's many remarkable qualities, his political vision was pre-eminent: he could read the future as well as any man of his time. No one would understand better than he that distance was the best protection against the Bear, that there was nothing to be said for trying to bring the two countries closer together. Why, then, go out of his way to help a foreigner to discover a route which might some day facilitate the invasion of India?

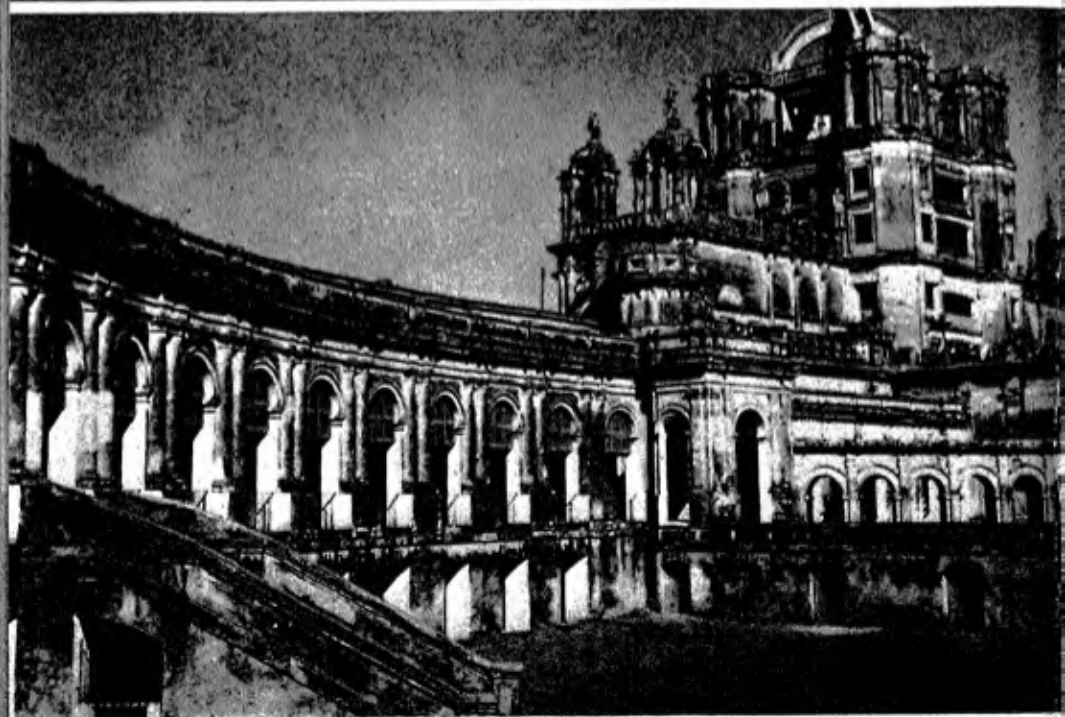
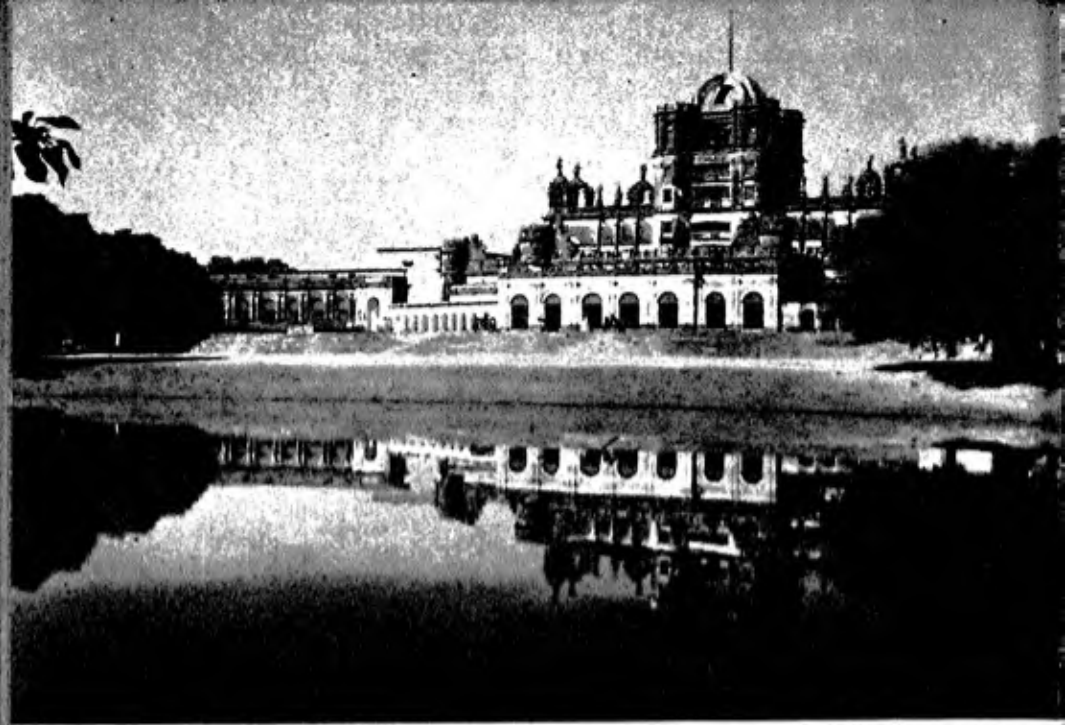
The only hypothesis which fits the facts is that, as the result of his meeting with Warren Hastings, de Boigne agreed to become a British agent. If, like those later adventurers who were to serve as a composite model for the Afghan in Kipling's *Kim*, he was to explore Central Asia, but in the British interest, all is explained—including his reticence about Russia in after life. We can see why Hastings gave him letters of recommendation to the principal British representatives in northern India. We can also see why he gave him personal letters of introduction to the Indian princes in alliance with the British Government. These would ensure that he would be treated with respect as the Governor-General's protégé and would procure for him, as in fact they did, *Khilats* or presents of honour.¹

Hastings was thus able to finance him for his projected

¹ Strictly, robes but also presents of money.



ASAF-UD-DAULAH



LA MARTINIÈRE

journey without drawing on the Company's funds and without "showing him on the books," which would have caused adverse comment in Calcutta, since he had just resigned at his own request from the Company's service. He was to be Hastings's personal agent and Hastings's motives are clear. If the overland route via "Cashmeer, Tartary and the Caspian Sea" were indeed practicable for troops, then it was important that the Governor-General should be informed about it. The Russians would have to know too but de Boigne would be able to exaggerate the difficulties without fear of contradiction. This was a heaven-sent opportunity to establish an agent in Russia who would be trusted by the Russians and would doubtless find means of reporting back through the British Ambassador. And to establish British agents; as distinct from official representatives in Russia was no easier then than it is to-day.

Since Macartney backed de Boigne and recommended that he be given help, I fancy that there must have been a private letter from Macartney to Hastings, though I have been unable to find it. At any rate, Macartney's experience and success at the Russian Court and his knowledge of the personalities there, including the Empress, would have given his opinion more weight in this matter than Hastings was usually disposed to allow to it.

De Boigne's motives in accepting are equally clear. However rosy his prospects in Russia, they were remote; this was present help when he badly needed it. Self-interest apart, he could hardly help falling under the spell of an Englishman of whom even Macaulay admits that "in the great art of inspiring large masses of human beings with confidence and attachment, no ruler ever surpassed him."

The confidence between these two practical and level-

headed men was mutual: it was Warren Hastings who was taking the greater chance by launching on a secret enterprise a foreigner of whose antecedents and career before coming to India he could know nothing except what de Boigne chose to tell him. That this confidence existed is proved indirectly by the fact that de Boigne, while in Calcutta, formed a lasting friendship with one Anthony Angelo.

Anthony Angelo Tremamondo, of the famous family of fencing-instructors and riding-masters to royalty in England, held a commission in the Governor-General's bodyguard. He was a personal friend and protégé of Hastings. It was on Hastings's recommendation that he was made Riding-Master to the Army of Bengal. He was given a large tract of land in Chowringhee, on which to establish his riding-school, again on the personal recommendation of the Governor-General. (It should be added that his appointment was welcomed by the Commander-in-Chief and by even the enemies of Hastings on the Board. It was also thoroughly well justified, for Angelo was an expert and revolutionised the training of cavalry on the Bengal establishment.)

De Boigne was thus not far away from the throne, even though he remained behind it in the shadows. It is perhaps still more significant that when he came to Lucknow, on the next stage of his adventures, he at once became a close and intimate friend of Major William Palmer, Military Secretary to Warren Hastings and his trusted political agent.

VI

“ Sink of Iniquity ”

DE BOIGNE reached Lucknow in September, 1782, at the beginning of the cold weather. He was armed with letters of recommendation from the Governor-General to Nathaniel Middleton, British Resident at the Court of Oudh, and to the Nawab-Vizier himself. Here he had his first sight of Edmund Burke's earthly paradise, an Indian state under one of those "Black Primates" whose beneficent rule Burke had been deluded into accepting as synonymous with a golden age for India.

There have been many descriptions of the Court of Oudh and of Asaf-ud-daulah, the generally benevolent despot who presided over it, suggesting, with his portly figure and handle-bar moustaches, some archaic Oriental Group-Captain who has gone to seed. But even when one read them in Lucknow itself, after dining, perhaps, with a Taluqdar or landowner baron, not far removed either in appearance or habits from his eighteenth century ancestors, one found it hard to believe that these eccentrics existed and were painted by Zoffany only a hundred and fifty years before.

Was there really a time when one man owned jewels

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worth £8,000,000 (three times that to-day), to say nothing of twenty palaces, more than a hundred private gardens, 1200 elephants, 3000 fine saddle-horses, 1500 double-barrel guns, chandeliers said to have cost more than a million pounds and countless clocks, for two of which he is known to have paid £30,000? There was indeed and Asaf-ud-daulah's staff was adequate to his establishment. His indoor servants numbered nearly three thousand, including several hundred cooks, and the kitchen expenses were between £200 and £300 a day. The gardens were kept trim and tidy by four thousand gardeners, while the royal moustaches were tended by fifty personal barbers. Attached to the stables were a thousand dogs intended for hunting and so devoted was the Nawab to animals that he kept as a personal pet an enormous Clydesdale dray-horse. At the same time he was passionately fond of cock-fighting and because the pigeon is a sacred bird to Muslims, having been the carrier of confidential messages from the Prophet, the number of fighting cocks and pigeons "on the strength" was estimated at 300,000.¹ There were also innumerable deer in a deer park and separate houses for monkeys, snakes, scorpions and spiders.

Yet Oudh was also a chaos of disorder and want. The tillers of the richest lands in India were starving. Justice existed only to be bought and sold. Exactions and oppressions by Government officials went unpunished. The roads were unsafe for travellers except in large bodies. "Murders, thefts and other enormities shocking to humanity" were committed in open day in the capital

¹ Another favourite sport, introduced by Colonel John Mordaunt, was the racing of old women in sacks. Though he had spent millions of pounds on entertainment, said the grateful Nawab, he had never found anything so enjoyable.

“SINK OF INIQUITY”

itself. The Treasury was exhausted “not in the services of your State but in embezzlement and dissipation.” These calamities were “universally ascribed to the treacherous and ungrateful abuse of your confidence by those in whom you have unworthily placed it.”

In spite of such remonstrances, repeated by successive Governors-General, they continued unchecked for the twenty-two years of his reign. Nevertheless, Asaf-ud-daulah was generally credited with having a good heart.¹ For this mild, polite and affable man, who liked to dress up as an Admiral of the Royal Navy or a dignitary of the Church of England, had one popular, if dubious, virtue—he was unboundedly generous with the money extorted from his subjects. So much so that there was a saying current in Oudh:

*“To whom Heaven does not give
Asaf-ud-daulah will.”*

Fresh from a scolding by Warren Hastings, who had visited Lucknow the year before in a vain attempt to clean out the Augean stable, he hastened to display it to the Governor-General's protégé. De Boigne, received in audience on his arrival, was not only furnished with letters of credit on Kabul and Kandahar for £1500 but was also given a *Khilat* or present of honour for his immediate needs. Not, of course, in cash, for it was not etiquette for the Nawab-Vizier or his ministers to handle money. Payments were invariably made in bills or bonds drawn by the Nawab. The lucky recipient was expected to discount them in the

¹ The quality of Asaf-ud-daulah's heart was shown when he was testing a new rifle. He fired and a man in the distance was seen to fall. “Good God! I fear your Highness has shot a man!” cried a British officer. “A man?” replied the Nawab. “It is only a *dhobi*, a washerman.”

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bazaar at the best rate he could get. There is thus no means of estimating the exact extent of Asaf-ud-daulah's liberality: it depended, not on the face value of the bill but on the state of a highly speculative market.

Fortunately for de Boigne, one of the first men with whom he came in contact was Lieutenant-Colonel Claud Martin,¹ the leading local expert on arbitrage and destined, like William Palmer, to become his devoted friend. Martin had not yet built his fabulous palace, Constantia or La Martinière, but he already lived in considerable style and was very much "in the money." As Chief Artificer to the Nawab-Vizier and head of the arsenal, he naturally took a commission on everything he supplied and would have been thought, at Court and by the ruler himself, to be crazy had he not done so. He was only singular in that what he supplied was satisfactory in quality and correct in quantity.

It was also profitable to be one of Asaf-ud-daulah's many agents for purchases overseas. But if Colonel Martin took his commission, he produced some fine tapestries for the palaces and some good pictures by Claude Lorrain. For "accommodation," whether in the form of loans or of safe custody for valuables, deposited with him by those afraid of being plundered by the State officials or by more forthright robbers, he charged twelve per cent, a rate not considered unreasonable even by the East India Company. Lending money to the Nawab-Vizier himself was a tricky, if potentially remunerative, business, the security needing close scrutiny. Then there were the fees from those seeking his help to gain admission to the Presence. As Martin's biographer wrote, "the main difficulty experienced by a

¹ The correct spelling was Claude Martine but it was usually Anglicised.

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suitor in a Native State is not so much to obtain justice as to obtain a hearing at all.”

In this he was helped by his beautiful and clever mistress, Boulone or “Lise,” as he called her. Having access to the royal harem, where were immured five hundred of the greatest beauties to be found in India—to singularly little purpose, Asaf-ud-daulah’s tastes lying in a very different direction—Lise was able to keep him posted on palace intrigues. From all these activities money came rolling in, though it is probable that he made quite as much by being one of the pioneers of indigo-planting. According to the standards of the time, Claud Martin served his master more honestly than most.

Personally he was a gay, sociable, hospitable little man. Like many Frenchmen, he never succeeded in mastering English and would interlard his conversation continually with “What do you call it?” and “Do you see?” His written French was almost equally queer. But Warren Hastings liked and trusted him and his successor found him a man “of much observation and penetration, whose language would be elegant if it corresponded with his ideas” and whose “singularities are amusing, not ridiculous.”

Martin’s natural good taste was shown by the fact that, at his death, his library contained more than four thousand books in Latin, Italian, French, English, Persian and Sanskrit and that he had collected a hundred and fifty oil paintings, amongst them forty-seven paintings and sketches by Zoffany, together with a complete set of Daniell’s Views of India. For the son of an artisan who left school and France at sixteen to become a private soldier, he showed much more interest in the country of his

adoption than many more highly-placed persons of our own day.

De Boigne, soon to leave Lucknow, as he thought, for Russia and for good, could not suspect that Martin's house was to be his second home for the next ten years and more. But Lyons and Chambéry are only seventy miles apart and although they had come a long way to meet and Martin was sixteen years the senior, it is not surprising that these two soldiers of fortune should have taken to each other at sight.

During the next five months the foundations of the friendship were firmly laid. Warren Hastings had advised de Boigne to study the Urdu and Persian which would be essential on his forward journey; Asaf-ud-daulah's generosity had made it possible for him to remain in Lucknow to do so. Martin introduced him to one Colonel Antoine Polier, a Swiss from Lausanne, who was qualified to teach him. Polier, a sapper officer of some distinction, whose appointment as Chief Engineer and Architect to the Nawab had just been unfairly cancelled, was living by his wits in Lucknow as a private citizen and was glad to get the job.

For de Boigne, with his gift for languages, there was no great difficulty in learning a couple more. In application the equal of any Swiss and always engrossed in the theory and practice of his profession, he had much else to learn from Polier. There was field engineering, for example, in which he had no previous technical training, whereas Polier had been Field Engineer to the Bengal army. Just as de Boigne, though an infantryman, subsequently showed himself a highly competent gunner officer, organising artillery and handling it with great skill in the field, so he

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became, if not an expert on field-works and fortification, at least the equal of most sapper officers of his day.¹

There was thus plenty with which he could occupy and interest himself for five months. There were also some more general lessons for him to take to heart. The Nawab's army, for example, was an awful warning to any soldier. On paper it was formidable, consisting of some 14,000 cavalry and nearly 50,000 infantry. But although these figured on the pay-rolls it is doubtful whether 10,000 could have been produced on parade. And as “a great part of his Creditors consist of His Excellency's undisciplined troops”—the only disciplined ones, imported Turks, had received no pay for ten months and were on the verge of mutiny—“it is but too evident how much so great an Evil must be increased by so lawless a rabble being let loose on the country.”

De Boigne never forgot the lesson learnt at Lucknow, that the first rule for a commander who wishes to make anything of Indian troops—and the rule most difficult to enforce in native states—is that they must be regularly paid. It was to prove the secret of his success.

Another profitable field for study and another awful warning was that provided by the English at the Court of Oudh. “Lucknow,” wrote Warren Hastings furiously to Macpherson, the year before de Boigne arrived, “is a Sink of Iniquity, the School of Rapacity. What do you say of beardless boys rejecting with indignation the offer of monthly gratuities of 3000 and 5000 rupees? (£375 and £625). What do you think of clerks clamouring for princi-

¹ Polier, author of *Mythologie des Hindous* and the first European to obtain a complete copy of the *vedas*, now in the British Museum, returned to Switzerland a rich man and was murdered by robbers or revolutionaries near Avignon in 1795.

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palities, threatening those who hesitate to gratify their wants with the vengeance of patronage and in the confidence of exhaustless resources gambling away two lakhs of rupees (£25,000) at a sitting and grumbling that their wants were not attended to? . . . What of a city filled with so many independent and absolute sovereignties as there are Englishmen in it?"

These worthies had other sources of income than the direct "gratuities" and grants of revenue which they extorted, by threats or cajolery, from the open-handed Nawab. When he was pressed for spending-money, as he always was, or had to find large sums at short notice to buy off his mutinous troops, they would make him loans at twenty or thirty per cent, a classic example, since everything they had ultimately came from him, of feeding the dog on its own tail. They would encourage his passion for collecting anything, from Clydesdales to candelabra, procure the desired objects for him from Europe, charge him four or five times what they cost and lend him the money to pay for them at three per cent *per month*. They would also gamble with him and it cannot be supposed that in this company Asaf-ud-daulah was a lucky gambler.

The officials were not much better. Richard Johnson, assistant to the Resident, had just been summarily sacked by the Governor-General for unwarranted interference in the Nawab's administration, if such it could be called; Middleton, the Resident to whom de Boigne had presented his letter of introduction, was removed a few weeks later for similar high-handedness and failure to produce accounts; to get rid of Bristow, who replaced him and who had "protection" in Calcutta, Warren Hastings had to withdraw the Residency. He summed up all three in a sentence.

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“ Johnson’s faults sink to mere errors and inadvertencies,” he wrote, “ when compared with those of his principal and are wholly lost when compared with those of the present Resident. . . . ”

Certainly the imported English were no credit to their country. When the Governor-General sought to chase out all Europeans from Lucknow he made exceptions only of Martin and Polier—apart, of course, from his personal agent, William Palmer, whose opinion of the rest was as unfavourable as his own.

In his attitude towards Indians, Warren Hastings was far in advance of his time. Indeed it would have been liberal even a hundred and fifty years later. “ I dare to pronounce,” he wrote, “ that they (the Hindus) are as exempt from the worst propensities of human nature as any people upon the face of the earth, *ourselves not excepted*. They are gentle, benevolent, more susceptible of gratitude for kindness shown them than prompt to vengeance for wrongs sustained, abhorrent of bloodshed, faithful and affectionate in service and submission to legal authority. . . . ”

Such sentiments would have been ridiculed in eighteenth century Calcutta, though not in the presence of the Governor-General, and derided in most English clubs and bungalows in our own day. At any time between 1857 and say, 1927, he would have been considered a renegade or a crank by many Englishmen for saying, in his introduction to a translation of the Bhagavad Gita, that “ *these writings will survive when the British dominion in India shall have long ceased to exist and when the sources which it once yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance.* ”

Meanwhile he saw that it was upon “ the virtue, not the ability of their servants, that the Company must rely.”

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Continually pressed by the Directors upon whom he was dependent and even by Ministers of the Crown to find lucrative "jobs for pals," forced to work with men like Macpherson, whom he knew to be corrupt, because they at least seemed willing to support him against even more corrupt enemies, he never had either the time or the authority to reform the whole administration, though he made several gallant attempts to spring-clean it. Some of his own financial transactions have been legitimately criticised. But no one, except Edmund Burke and Francis and their dupes, has ever suggested that his motive was his own enrichment and he left India comparatively poor.

It was fortunate for de Boigne that he fell in with a man who "loved the people of India and respected them to a degree no other British ruler has ever equalled." It was fortunate that he became a friend of Englishmen, weaker vessels, perhaps, but who had yet profited by Hastings's precept and example. It was fortunate that he spent those five months in Lucknow and saw for himself the corruption and intrigue of an Indian court and its effect upon the Europeans hanging on to it. But for that, though essentially an honest man, he might have remained no more than a soldier—adventurer like so many others, tolerated by an Indian ruler for his military talents and cast aside when there was no further use for them. As it was, he was soon to confirm that, in a European, courtesy, honesty and forthrightness are the keys to an Indian's confidence and that that confidence, once bestowed, is never withdrawn so long as it is not abused.

In February, 1783, he left Lucknow to join Major James Browne, whom Warren Hastings had selected to be his representative at the court of the Mogul Emperor, Shah

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Alam. Browne was to “study the characters, connections, influence and power of the several competitors for the King’s favour or the exercise of his authority.” He was also to report on the condition and political relations of the various powers in the neighbourhood of Delhi. It was a mark of confidence that de Boigne should have been invited to travel with him on so important a mission. But so far as he knew he was merely to “make his number” with the Emperor’s Minister at Delhi and then be on his way to Russia.

VII

The Stolen Papers

ON FEBRUARY 23rd, 1783, Major James Browne made his camp on the eastern bank of the river Jumna and could see, across the river, the domes of the once splendid and imperial city of Agra. He had another camp-follower besides de Boigne. This was William Hodges, the peripatetic Royal Academician who had accompanied Captain Cook on his second voyage.

In an interesting book, illustrated from his own paintings, about his journeys in India from 1780 to 1783, Hodges vividly described the emotions of himself and his companions when they crossed the Jumna a few days later. "It was impossible," he wrote, "to contemplate the ruins of this grand and venerable city without feeling the deepest impressions of melancholy . . . They extend, along the banks of the river, not less than fourteen English miles . . . The great Musjid or Mosque, built of red stone, is greatly gone to decay. Adjacent to it is the Choke (Chowk) or Exchange, now a ruin; even the Fort itself, from its having frequently changed its masters in the course of the last seventy years, is going rapidly to desolation. . . ."

These were but the outward signs of disruption. The great empire of the Moguls was *in extremis* and round the festering

carcass clustered the kites and larger carnivores of northern India, ready to move in on the kill.

The Emperor Shah Alam still lived in his capital of Delhi and was, indeed, to survive, a miserable and politically impotent old man, for more than twenty years. In himself he was nothing, another Asaf-ud-daulah, differing only from his Vizier in Oudh in that he was marvellously devout, of an avarice which went beyond all bounds, keeping his swarms of princes and princesses in the Red Fort on starvation allowances, and an inordinate lover of women. It was as a symbol, a cloak of legitimacy, that he was important. Though he was the weakest ruler in all India, it suited the others, including the British, to pay him lip-service and to profess their allegiance to him as the authentic fount of power. He remained the liege-lord; possession of his person was a prize; there was no Indian prince who did not seek confirmation of his succession from the Emperor.

Shah Alam being what he was, fickle and suspicious indeed but too indolent to act, authority lay in the hands of his Chief Minister of the moment. For this position two rivals were now contending. Afrasiab Khan and Mirza Shafi Khan were close together, keeping jealous watch on each other from their separate camps outside Agra. It was Afrasiab Khan who called on Major Browne the day after he arrived. But it was Mirza Shafi who was temporarily in the Emperor's favour and it was his *darbar* that Browne and Hodges and de Boigne attended.

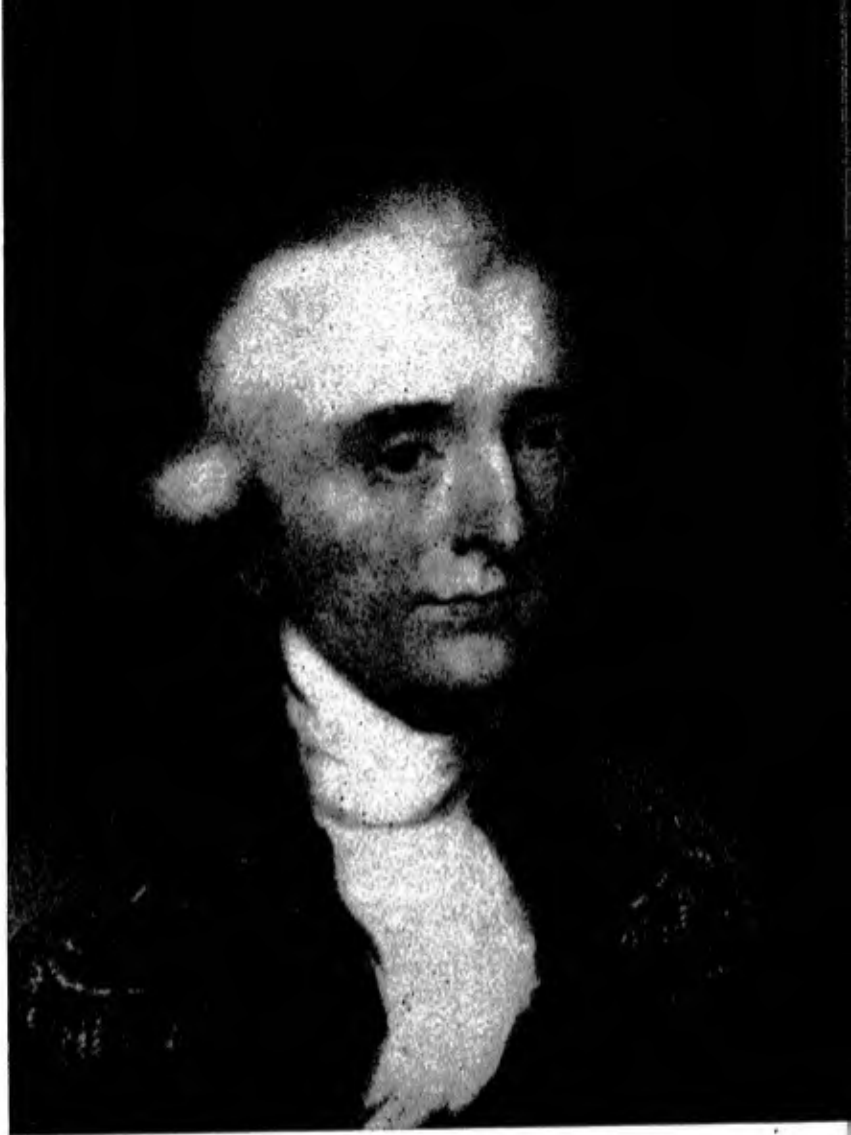
They were received in an imperial tent of crimson velvet, embroidered with gold and lined with silk, but much torn and moth-eaten. Surrounded by lesser chiefs and innumerable servants, Mirza Shafi did not rise to greet the

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Governor-General's representative: he merely touched his turban and waved them to chairs, once richly upholstered but now as derelict as the tent.

This was only a visit of ceremony and "the business of Major Browne's mission," says Hodges, "was not entered upon for many days afterwards, for, amongst these people, delay seems a settled matter of etiquette." In fact, Mirza Shafi Khan was by no means anxious to enter upon it at all. The East India Company was distrusted in only a slightly lesser degree than the other aspirants to power over the Emperor and it did not suit anybody's book to have Warren Hastings's personal agent prying into the "characters, connections and influence of the several competitors for the possession of the King's favour or the exercise of his authority." In such cases, procrastination is the well-tried weapon of the East and Browne was kept hanging about for many months.

Fatehpur-Sikri, to which he moved in March, de Boigne and Hodges with him, was as desolate as it is to-day. The palace was in total ruin; the lake was dry; only the mosque, with its "portal of great magnificence," retained something of its former splendour. But the burning winds which usher in the hot weather had now begun to blow and already the thermometer stood at 106 at noon. The suspicion which attached to Browne extended to his companions. "My intentions of visiting Delhi were frustrated by the movements of the army under Mirza Shafi Khan," writes Hodges, "and no probability appeared of reaching the capital under the sanction of Major Browne's embassy. The country being overrun by two hostile armies, as well as by marauding parties from each, invaded by the Seiks (Sikhs) from the province of Lahore . . . and infested by bands



CLAUD MARTIN



WILLIAM PALMER AND HIS FAMILY

of robbers, I was obliged in prudence to direct my course towards Gwalior."

A few weeks later de Boigne was invited by David Anderson, Warren Hastings's political agent and Resident with Mahadaji Sindhia, the Mahratta chieftain, to pay a visit to his camp near Gwalior. Because Anderson was such a "prodigious favourite" of the Governor-General, who trusted him implicitly and signed even business letters to him "your most affectionate friend," de Boigne naturally jumped at the invitation—the more so as there seemed no immediate prospect of an interview with the Emperor in Delhi.

* * *

Since the B.O.A.C. flying-boats ceased to land on the lake, Gwalior has had few European visitors. But no one who has been there will forget his first sight of its astonishing fortress. Standing on an isolated rock of sandstone and rising sheer from the plain for perhaps three hundred feet, it seems to soar into the sky.

The sides of the rock are perpendicular, or have been made so, and in places the buildings and the enclosing wall actually overhang them. The rampart conforms to the edge of the precipice all round. The only access is by steps running up the side of the rock, defended at the top by bastions. On the summit, a mile and a half long and three hundred yards broad, was then a considerable town, with a Mogul palace, in which recalcitrant members of the royal family and other high-ranking prisoners used to be confined. For their amusement they were allowed "a large menagerie of beasts, such as lions and tigers." With an ample water supply from wells and reservoirs, the fortress was impregnable,

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the Gibraltar of India. It could be reduced only by surprise or blockade. In the past seven hundred years (for it is first heard of in A.D. 1008), it had often changed hands. "But the means of transfer were always either by famine or treachery."

That had been true until three years before. Then, by a daring feat of arms, Major Popham, with only twenty men, under a single engineer officer, Captain Bruce, had scaled the precipitous heights in darkness, silently overpowered the guard and captured the fortress without the loss of a single man. The British were at war with the Mahrattas and Sindhia's stronghold had been handed over to his enemy, the Raja of Gohad.

Now the wheel had turned. A peace treaty between the East India Company and the Mahrattas had been signed. Under it Sindhia was entitled to recover his former possessions, if he could, though he was to expect no help from the Company's troops.

As de Boigne rode across the plain he was confronted with a sight to stir the spirit of any soldier. Around the towering fortress was encamped an army of 70,000 men, with tents and banners, the Mahratta host that Sindhia had assembled for its reduction. Against such a force the Raja of Gohad dared not attempt its relief: he could only hope that it would hold out. And how did Sindhia propose to capture it? De Boigne could look forward to a few pleasant weeks as the guest of David Anderson. From a ringside seat he would be able to watch, for the first time, a Mahratta general and Mahratta troops in action.

Anderson, engaged in settling with Sindhia questions arising out of the Treaty of Salbai, was the best guide possible to the politics of northern India. In essentials

they were simple enough, from the British point of view.

The East India Company at this period had neither the strength nor the inclination to attempt to usurp the Emperor's power for itself. So long as the buffer-state of Oudh remained unmolested, the British—and especially the Court of Directors of the Company—were content to confine themselves to their legitimate trading interests. But power was about to fall and it was vital to them to ensure that it fell into friendly hands. Were some adventurer to arise powerful enough to unite all the powers of Hindustan¹ against the Company, "our dominion," wrote Hastings, "which subsists loosely on the weakness of our neighbours and on the illusion of popular opinion, at least as much as on our military strength, will be exposed to greater dangers than it has yet had to encounter, though it has been many times near the brink of destruction."

By 1781 he had come to the conclusion that Mahadaji Sindhia was his man. "In all his transactions with the English," he wrote to the Board, "he has shown an uncommon degree of steadiness and sincerity . . . I am warranted in believing that Sindhia has firmly connected his interests with ours, and looks upon his alliance with the English as the surest means of preserving the power and independence which he now professes." Hence the Treaty of Salbai.

Sindhia, for his part, proposed quite simply to make himself master of northern India. He would have to act in the name of his overlord, the *Peshwa* or hereditary President of the loose Mahratta confederacy, whose capital was at Poona. He would continue to pay allegiance to

¹ Used loosely of the whole of India but properly of the north-western provinces of the Mogul Empire, between the rivers Sutlej and Chambal.

the shadowy figure of the Emperor at Delhi. For the substance of power he would sacrifice the trappings. But no one now had any doubt about his ambitions and none, he resolved, should fail to know in future who was the real ruler in Hindustan. As for the British, he had no wish to interfere with them so long as they did not interfere with him. Warren Hastings he trusted personally, as Hastings trusted him. But he could not be so sure of all his subordinates.

Major James Browne, for example, did not trust Sindhia at all and strongly disapproved of the Treaty of Salbai. Sindhia, he said, as soon as he had consolidated his power on the ruins of the Mogul Empire, would form a confederacy to drive the British into the sea—an idea with which there is some evidence that he had indeed once dallied. Browne made no secret of his suspicions and communicated them to the Governor-General. David Anderson, who knew Sindhia, took the opposite view and believed in the policy of Hastings, which it was now his duty to implement.

De Boigne, having been so long in Browne's company, was not predisposed to trust Sindhia either. But to him "Mahadaji Sindhia" was only a name. So far as he knew, Sindhia had never heard him. As a mere bird of passage, he expected and feared nothing from the Mahrattas. His eyes were on the north and their ambitions were not his concern. In any case, respect for Hastings's judgment would have made him keep an open mind—had not Sindhia chosen this moment to deal him, without provocation, a crushing, almost a knock-out blow.

The night before he reached Anderson's camp, the whole of his baggage was stolen while he slept. In it were his passports, his introductions, his letters of credit on Kabul

and Kandahar. Without them, his money and his clothes, he was as destitute as when, nine years before, he had been captured by the Turks at Tenedos or as when he swam ashore from the wreck at Alexandria.

There was—and is—no doubt that the thieves were acting under Sindhia's orders. What possessed him to behave in so monstrous a fashion? With British goodwill so essential to him, why molest a visitor to Anderson, the British Resident at his court and his own friend?

The ironical answer is that the secret of de Boigne's projected journey had been too well kept. Had Sindhia known it, he would doubtless have helped him on his way with presents. As it was, he was suspicious. Who was this mysterious stranger? Why had he been so long with Major Browne, no friend, in Agra? Why did he wish to go to Delhi and see the Emperor? (Sindhia had his spies in Mirza Shafi's camp). Why had he come to Gwalior? He was a Frenchman, apparently, and Sindhia had fought against the French. It was a Frenchman, Médoc (or Madoc), who had sold to the Raja of Gohad his artillery and his only efficient battalion of infantry. Better find out about him . . . Perhaps he had papers. . . .

While de Boigne sat disconsolate in his tent in the burning heat of June, Anderson went off to Sindhia to complain. Most of the baggage was recovered but of the papers there was no trace. Sindhia denied all knowledge of them, of de Boigne and of the robbery. He was a ruling prince in all but name, negotiating with the Governor-General as an equal. Anderson could not call him a thief and a liar to his face, unless he wished to be expelled from the camp and to imperil the work that he had done. He could only express his thanks for the recovery of the baggage.

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And what could de Boigne do? Without his introductions and his letters of credit it was useless to think of going on. Introductions might perhaps be provided by Anderson and Browne but they would not bear the signature of the Governor-General. Could he go back to Warren Hastings and confess that he had allowed himself to be robbed of documents which ought never to have been in his baggage but in his pocket? That was difficult enough. Worse, he would have to accuse Sindhia, the last man whom Hastings wished to offend.

To return to Lucknow and try to persuade Asaf-ud-daulah to issue fresh letters of credit and make another grant of cash was unthinkable, though Claud Martin could probably have arranged it easily enough. It was equally unthinkable to try to recover his commission in the East India Company's forces. He would almost certainly be refused and it would be humiliating even to ask.

* * *

"It was then that M. de Boigne first thought of endeavouring to find employment in the service of some native prince." So he told Grant Duff, forty years later. Not Sindhia, of course. But why not Sindhia's enemy, the Raja of Gohad? With him he might both find employment and settle the score.

The plan could not be disclosed to David Anderson. But de Boigne managed to get into touch with Major Sangster, a Scottish adventurer who commanded Médoc's well-trained battalion of a thousand men and "a very respectable train of artillery." The force was not strong enough alone to raise the siege. But give him a *lakh* of rupees (£12,500), said de Boigne, and he would go to the Emperor's territory east of the Jumna and himself raise another two battalions.

When he had them in shape, he and Sangster, with the Médoc battalion, in which there were several European officers, would make a surprise attack by night on Sindhia's camp, drive off the Mahrattas and relieve the fortress.

To the end of his life de Boigne believed that, with three battalions and the advantage of surprise, he would have routed 70,000 Mahrattas. There was by then no better judge. And in fact the Mahrattas, though, when mounted, they could overrun a countryside like a swarm of locusts, were not trained to face disciplined troops on foot.

At any rate de Boigne convinced Sangster and Sangster carried the plan to his master. The Raja of Gohad was tempted. What gave him pause was the idea of trusting an unknown foreigner with a lakh of rupees. What was there to prevent his pocketing the money and making off? As that is just what half the European adventurers in India would have done, given the chance, his hesitation was natural. Still, he need not have published the plan in his orders and represented, in a childish attempt to intimidate Sindhia, that the "surprise" attack would soon take place!

The Mahratta agents quickly discovered the author of the scheme. When they did so, it was not to be wondered at that M. de Boigne "excited the enmity of Sindhia," who complained to the Governor-General. Nevertheless, Sindhia studied the scheme with a soldier's eye and "saw the merit of the suggestion."

To put a stop to any more such projects, he found means to buy over one of the Raja of Gohad's officers. On the night of July 31st, 1783, the traitor opened the gates to a scaling-party of Sindhia's men. The fortress of Gwalior, falling once more to treachery, was restored to its rightful owner. The Raja capitulated and forced Sangster, too,

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to surrender. De Boigne found it advisable to rejoin Major Browne in Agra. His first attempt to find employment with an Indian prince had been nipped in the bud.

His next, though it promised well, was equally fruitless—and that through his own fault. On the introduction of Browne who, as we know, distrusted Sindhia, he entered into negotiations with the Rajput Raja of Jaipur, who had good reason to distrust all Mahrattas. By Jaipur he was engaged to raise and train two battalions of infantry, on a salary of Rs.2000 (£250) a month.

This was such a stroke of fortune that de Boigne wrote to tell Warren Hastings of his good luck. But he made the mistake of writing to the Governor-General in his official style. Officially, Hastings could not approve the appointment. Had he done so, there would have been questions by his enemies in Council and another complaint from Sindhia. He therefore sent for de Boigne to come to Calcutta and explain.

Though Jaipur was an independent state and he a free agent, de Boigne said that he was "ordered" to Calcutta—"a summons with which he immediately complied." From gratitude and politeness and a desire to keep in with the Governor-General? Perhaps. But to endanger his new job by not taking it up until he had made a round trip of nearly two thousand miles suggests that Hastings had some firmer hold over him. At any rate he set out with David Anderson who, on November 2nd, had relinquished his Residency and taken formal leave of Sindhia.

That ceremony it is not to be supposed that he attended: Sindhia was the last man to have forgotten so soon either the name or the machinations of M. de Boigne.

In Calcutta, Hastings was preparing for his farewell

visit to Oudh before retirement. William Palmer was to await him in Lucknow, David Anderson was to return with him, together with the painter Zoffany and others. Hastings reached Lucknow on March 27th, 1784 and spent there the next five months, the worst of the hot weather, tying-up loose ends with his two political agents, taking leave of Asaf-ud-daulah and making a last attempt, foredoomed to failure, to introduce order into the affairs of the Nawab-Vizier.

De Boigne seems to have satisfied the Governor-General and to have been allowed to return in advance of the party to Jaipur. But Indian princes do not like to be kept waiting. "Before he could reach the upper provinces, events had occurred which induced the Raja of Jaipur to alter his intentions. This change was a severe disappointment to M. de Boigne" he told Grant Duff, "but the Raja made him a present of Rs.10,000" (£1250).

Five months' severance pay was adequate, indeed generous, compensation. We may be sure that he would not have obtained it had it not been embarrassing to have him sitting on the palace door-step. Nevertheless, it was all he had to show for two years' scheming: he was now rising thirty-four and still out of a job.

VIII

In the Service of Sindhia

TEN THOUSAND rupees do not last for ever. Nor does hospitality. Eighteen months after the theft of his papers, de Boigne had money enough for his immediate needs. In Major Browne's camp at Agra he had at least a canvas roof over his head. But what was to beome of him when the money was spent and he could no longer quarter himself indefinitely on Browne? Where was he to find employment?

The answer came suddenly and from the most unlikely quarter. In Major Browne's tent there appeared Apa Khande Rao, one of Sindhia's senior generals, "much the most respectable of all his confidants," according to Anderson, "and warmly attached to the English." He understood, he said, that Major Browne had a guest, by name de Boigne. If he were in camp, could he be summoned, as Apa Khande Rao had a proposition to put which might interest him?

How did this come about? James Anderson had been trying to persuade some of the Mahratta generals to take de Boigne into their service. The name was not one to commend itself to Sindhia's staff and he had been un-

successful. To his Persian secretary, one Khair-ud-din, he confided that he could not ask Sindhia himself to engage de Boigne, both because of what had passed between them and because he had no authority from Calcutta to do so. But he would be happy if it could be done indirectly, without his own name being brought in. . . .

Here we may see the hand of Warren Hastings. James Anderson was his personal agent and, like his brother David, his devoted friend. If Anderson busied himself in the matter, it was presumably on Hastings's instructions. The motive, too, is clear. Great events were impending in northern India: it would be more valuable to have a trustworthy non-official, who was also not English, in Sindhia's service than to send de Boigne off again on the road to Russia. There, if he ever arrived, he might be useful to the Governor-General: here, if he could be discreetly infiltrated, he undoubtedly would be.

Khair-ud-din knew just how to set on foot an intrigue of this kind. His friend, Lal Muhammad Khan, had influence with Apa Khande Rao. Primed by Khair-ud-din, Lal Muhammad went to the general and said: "Look! You have raised an army as numerous as ants and locusts. But these men are utterly useless, without a stiffening of disciplined musketeers. A single sepoy battalion, British trained and led, when properly equipped and handled, can drive away your 40,000 horse and foot like so many kites."

Apa Khande Rao was a cavalryman but the same idea had been working in his mind for some time past—and in that of his master. "He asked Lal Muhammad where he could get an expert captain to raise and train sepoy battalions for him. The latter advised him to go to Anderson,

express his desire and beg his assistance in supplying this need of his army."

The plan worked like an Eastern charm. When Apa Khande Rao visited Anderson for this purpose, Khair-ud-din, who had been pulling all these strings and who happened to be present, highly praised de Boigne. Lal Muhammad, also opportunely at hand, advised Apa to go to Major Browne the very next day at Agra and request him to ask de Boigne to join the Mahratta service. "In Browne's tent," says Khair-ud-din, "de Boigne was introduced to Apa Khande Rao, *who accepted all the conditions laid down by him.*"

The remark is revealing. It was not the prospective employer who laid down the conditions but the hitherto unsuccessful and frustrated adventurer, desperately in need of employment. Not that de Boigne felt any sense of superiority in dealing with a "native." He was completely free from racial arrogance and judged all men on their merits. Nor was he bluffing. It needed a poker-player's nerve to hold out for his own terms but he was not a mere gambler. The truth is that, far from being unmanned by his misfortunes, he had matured with them and was now at the height of his powers.

Never one to be put upon, as his letter to Lord Macartney shows, de Boigne knew his own worth. In the India of those days a highly-trained professional soldier, who was also *un homme sérieux* and unattached, had a scarcity value. There were able soldiers of fortune about but most of them had something to hide. Often they were private soldiers posing as former officers. If they had really been officers, many had left their own service under a cloud, cashiered or with a court-martial impending. Others had

private weaknesses which Indians are remarkably quick to detect. Others, again, were suspect because of their nationality. Who knew where their loyalty lay?

De Boigne was exceptional. He had held commissions in three armies. The Andersons could vouch for that and for his character. Though his professional competence had still to be proved, it was obvious to a soldier's eye. Had not Sindhia himself seen "the merit of the suggestion" for his own military discomfiture? Ostensibly he owed no allegiance to the Company or anyone else. He came from an obscure country which could not be suspected, like England and France, of designs on India. It was easy to understand why Apa Khande Rao wanted him.

From his vantage-point at Agra, de Boigne could see how urgently he or someone like him was needed. Two murders had recently been committed, most opportunely for Sindhia. Mirza Shafi Khan, the Emperor Shah Alam's Chief Minister, had been assassinated by order of Afrasiab, his rival. Soon afterwards Afrasiab was stabbed to death in his tent at Agra by Muhammad Beg, Mirza Shafi's brother. The field was clear, for there was no successor in sight. Sindhia hurried to Delhi to offer his services to the Emperor.

From Shah Alam he obtained two patents. The first conferred on the Peshwa, his own overlord, the title of Supreme Deputy to the Emperor. The second made Sindhia himself deputy to the Peshwa in the Emperor's domains. Since the Peshwa was far away in Poona, Sindhia thus secured, by the authority of Shah Alam, the executive power in Hindustan. To it was added the command of the Imperial Army, such as it was. The provinces of Delhi and Agra were also handed over to his management. In return he engaged to pay Rs.65,000 (£8000) a month for

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the expenses of Shah Alam's household and to increase the amount as the two provinces became more settled and prosperous. The harem could be enlarged, the princes and princesses eat more regularly, the servants and even the bodyguard might be paid.

Sindhia had come, he said, to the help of the Lord of the Known World and Asylum of the Universe, inconvenienced by the misbehaviour of some of his ungrateful subjects. In reality he had won for himself the succession to the Mogul Empire in northern India: it only remained to be seen whether he could keep it.

If there was one thing certain it was that, sooner rather than later, he would have to fight to do so and for that crucial struggle he knew that his undisciplined Mahrattas were inadequate. "What soldiers yours are!" he remarked after Major Popham and Captain Bruce had snatched his fortress of Gwalior and Bruce, for good measure, had beaten up his camp in another night attack. "*Such are the troops I would like to have.*" Such were the troops whom de Boigne was to provide.

There was some hard bargaining as the tall, spare, big-boned Savoyard, courteous but watchful and already a little taciturn, confronted the roly-poly Hindu general across the table in Major Browne's tent. De Boigne's first stipulation was one which Apa Khande Rao, on behalf of his master, could hasten to accept. It was, significantly, that M. de Boigne should never, in any circumstances, be called upon to take arms against the English. Agreement about money was not so easily reached. Apa Khande Rao's respectable qualities did not include a readiness to part with cash. De Boigne, for his part, was not the descendant of successful tradesmen and lawyers for nothing. For raising

and equipping two battalions of infantry, each 850 strong, he asked for an advance of Rs.50,000 (£6500), which was half what he had alarmed the Raja of Gohad by asking. He did not get his advance but agreed to accept Rs. 1000 (£125) a month for himself and eight rupees a month for each man enlisted, irrespective of rank.

Immediate finance was the snag but Lal Muhammad came nobly to the rescue by offering his personal security. On the strength of it, Apa Khande Rao gave a *hundi* or bill on Lucknow bankers for Rs.8000 (£1000) for the purchase of muskets of English make and another for Rs.10,000 (£1250) on Jhansi bankers for red broadcloth for uniforms. A little later, Lal Muhammad managed to extort Rs.10,000 for de Boigne's personal needs. Though the terms were hardly lavish, they seem to have required the approval of Sindhia himself and it was probably at this time, December, 1784, that Sindhia and de Boigne first came face to face.

Armed with his hopes and his *hundis* de Boigne set off at once for Lucknow. In the purchase of muskets there was no one so well able to help him as Claud Martin, Chief Artificer to the Nawab of Oudh. In gratitude to Lal Muhammad, one of his retainers was appointed *diwan*, or man of affairs. Another was placed in temporary command of one of the prospective battalions and sent off to enlist recruits; a Mahratta was dispatched to buy the material for uniforms in Jhansi. De Boigne fixed the pay of the sepoys at Rs.5.8.—about thirteen shillings a month. Out of the balance he had to pay the officers, when he could find them.

Any reader who may have been adjutant of a battalion ordered overseas will know the work involved, even with

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up-to-date Mobilisation Store Tables and the help of a good Quartermaster, a good Regimental Sergeant-Major and good company commanders. De Boigne had to start from scratch to form two battalions "as nearly as possible on the plan of those in the English service, and armed, disciplined and clothed after that manner." His reflection that the "labour which this imposed on an individual may be easily conceived by any person acquainted with military affairs," will not be challenged.

Recruits were no trouble, the prospect, even the promise of regular pay, however small, brought them flocking in from Agra and Oudh, excellent, tough infantry material, needing only to be weeded out. (De Boigne did not wish to recruit Mahrattas, who were horsemen and not of much use when separated from their horses, though World War II showed that this is no longer true.) The difficulty was European officers.

Fortunately the corps of Colonel René Médoc had recently been disbanded and de Boigne was able to get hold of George Sangster, the Scot who had commanded Médoc's battalion, sold to the Raja of Gohad. Sangster was doubly valuable because he was so skilled in casting cannon and making muskets that they were said to be equal to any produced by British ordnance factories. De Boigne decided to have his own cannon foundry and arsenal at Agra and to put Sangster in charge of them.

No nominal roll of the original officers of the two battalions exists, though the names of Englishmen, Frenchmen, Scots, Savoyards, Dutchmen, Irishmen, Germans, Italians and even a solitary American¹ who later served under de Boigne are known. From the Médoc sale he was, however, able to

¹ Captain J. P. Boyd, late of the United States Army.

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pick up enough junior officers of mixed nationalities to provide the necessary European "stiffening."

Within not much more than six months the battalions were up to strength, smartly uniformed, well-armed, well-disciplined and exercised in infantry tactics according to the best British and Continental models of the day. They were also provided with a modest ancillary force of equally well-trained artillery. Since recruiting and training had to be carried on simultaneously and the training was done during hot weather on the plains, with the thermometer ranging between 100 and 116 in the shade, it was a remarkable achievement.

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Having reported his battalions fit for active service, de Boigne was ordered to march with them to the Allahabad area, where Apa Khande Rao was about to launch a small punitive expedition against certain minor Rajas who were behindhand with their tribute and unrepentant about it. Of their baptism of fire we have no contemporary account. We know only that, though the Mahratta cavalry who formed the rest of the force were typically contemptuous of soldiers who fought on their feet, Apa Khande Rao left the reduction of the strong fortress of Kalinjar to the new battalions and their artillery. The operation was so quickly and efficiently carried out that Apa Khande Rao was lavish with his praise.

Unfortunately it was only with praise that he was lavish and de Boigne was by no means satisfied with service under him. In one of his rare early letters, he writes from "Camp near Kalinjar" on July 3rd of the following summer, 1786, in the most doleful and indignant terms:

“For some months past I was in a very good hope of our marching before the rainy weather towards you. But as the Devil will have it, no appearance is now to be entertained as the rivers are everywhere immensely swelled and the *mamlats* (tribute money), not finished with any of the Rajas. It appears their panic has now left them, having had time enough to make themselves perfectly well acquainted with the generalship and abilities as well as [the] courage of my great Chief, Apa, of whom the troops are very much tired as no pay is to be got from him. The few lakhs which have already been paid on account of the *mamlats* have been packed [up] by the great *shraf* (field-cashier), Aba Naik, and the troops are starving. Mr. Taylor's troops have been, for eight or ten days, very mutinous for their pay; however, a little money has pacified them for the present but I am much afraid that many other mutinies will soon take place. *For my part, as long as I shall be able to keep my troops from doing any such thing, I will do it and exert all my power, and I shall not leave myself with a penny, as several times I have done already to prevent mutiny, wishing to leave Apa with honour and satisfaction, which I beg also to be soon, as nothing but danger, loss, empty words is to be expected from him.* Good God! What kind of a man, void of every principle of humanity, a miser and mean to excess. I have not had the pleasure yet to see a man quitting his service without total ruin; the danger is frightful.”

The letter does not show much gratitude to Apa Khande Rao, who gave de Boigne his chance? Perhaps not. But it does show a respect for the rights of the private soldier which was most unusual in men of the day. And before we smugly

assume that only Eastern commanders could be so indifferent to the welfare of their troops, let us remember conditions in the Royal Navy and that the mutinies of Spithead and the Nore still lay more than ten years ahead. De Boigne was well in advance of his time.

It was the prospect of action which reconciled him to Apa Khande Rao and made him forget his ideas of retirement. For Sindhia was in trouble. If he had largely succeeded in his aim of gradually undermining the Mussulman power and establishing his own influence, it was, wrote Browne to Sir John Macpherson,¹ "more by a concurrence of fortunate events than by any great exertions of his own. The Mussulman chiefs, dispersed and deprived of their power, want nothing but a head to enable them yet to assert their own independency . . ." Religion alone would have ensured their hostility to a Hindu: Sindhia touched them in an even more tender spot when he started to investigate their titles to their *jagirs* or grants of land.

This inquiry was justified. It had been the policy and the practice of the great Mogul emperors to make such grants only for life and to resume them on the death of the recipient; they had deliberately avoided creating a patrician order of landed proprietors. Moreover, if Sindhia was to make his two provinces viable and pay for a standing army, he had to find means of increasing the revenue. But in the disintegration of the Empire what had been conferred for life had come to be regarded as having been ceded in perpetuity. As soon as Sindhia cast eyes on the hen-roosts,

¹ Warren Hastings left India for good in February, 1785 and was temporarily replaced as Governor-General by Sir John Macpherson, pending the arrival of Lord Cornwallis.

he made certain of one set of enemies whom nothing else could unite.

Then there were the semi-Hindu Sikhs across the Jumna who might have to be dealt with at any time. Much more immediately formidable were the Rajput Rajas—Jodhpur, Jaipur, Udaipur and others—Hindus, indeed, but proud and independent princes, ruling races with a great fighting record. They detested Mahrattas and had no intention, if they could help it, of paying to Sindhia the tribute they owed to the Emperor.

Meanwhile the miserable old Emperor, guarded in Delhi by a garrison of Sindhia's troops, was far from friendly. He complained, and it would seem with justice, that his promised allowance was not being regularly paid and that his protector was not treating him with proper respect. What was worse, Sindhia's own overlord, the Peshwa, and his great minister, Nana Farnavis, known as "the Mahratta Machiavelli," though they had been impressed by his sudden rise to power, were jealous of him and reluctant to come to his aid unless they could share it in substance as well as in name. Thus, in the absence of Mahratta reinforcements, Sindhia was forced to depend largely on the Imperial army. It was not, in fact, to be depended upon at all.

Faced suddenly with a coalition of the Rajput rulers of Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur, who derisively refused payment of tribute, Sindhia was forced to take the field against them—and at the same time to dispatch to the north a force he could ill spare, to repel an invasion by the Sikhs. It was fortunate that he had sent for Apa Khande Rao and de Boigne. They arrived with their troops only just in time. When Sindhia advanced into Rajputana to enforce the

payment, a formidable Rajput army was drawn up to give him battle near the village of Tunga (generally called Lalsot), some forty miles to the south-east of Jaipur.

* * *

The value of the Imperial army was now revealed. Two of its principal generals were Muhammad Beg, the murderer of Afrasiab, to whom Sindhia had given asylum, and his nephew Ismail Beg, a turncoat but a man of such extraordinary physical courage and engaging personality that even his enemies found it hard to dislike him. These two promptly went over to the Rajputs, taking with them the Mogul cavalry and some of the Imperial infantry. The only hope was to give battle, with the Imperial troops in the centre, where de Boigne's two battalions on the left and the Mahratta cavalry on the right might at least prevent them deserting in a body to the enemy.

By a fortunate chance, Muhammad Beg was killed by a cannon-ball at the outset of the action and his followers lost heart. But Ismail Beg rallied them and drove back the Mahratta cavalry. On this, a full-dress attack was launched by the Rajput mounted troops against de Boigne's battalions. The Rathor horsemen were famous and fearless and their strength was estimated at 10,000. They despised infantry and moved forward confidently to ride over them and roll up Sindhia's left flank. To see this heavy cloud of cavalry descending upon them and breaking from a trot into a canter, from a canter into a gallop as they charged, would have tested the nerves of the steadiest troops.

These were new formations, facing their first major action. But it was now that discipline and intensive training told. De Boigne had drawn up his battalions in a hollow square,

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with the front rank masking his artillery. When the enemy, magnificent men in chain mail, magnificently mounted, their swords and lances glittering in the sunshine, were almost upon them, the front rank stepped back and the guns opened with grape. The attack was pressed home in spite of terrible casualties and the Rathors almost overrode the gunners and broke into the square. But volleys of well-controlled musketry fire at close range were more than the horses could face. With the ground strewn with struggling horses and dying men and the impetus of the charge spent, de Boigne saw his opportunity and sounded the advance.

Much was later to be made of his unrivalled experience with the famous Clare Regiment of the French army, with the Russian army in the Mediterranean and with the forces of the Company in southern India. The fact was that he had never hitherto commanded even a company in the field and this was the first time in his life that he had been seriously under fire. He was merely a born soldier who had studied his profession and was cool-headed enough to put theory into practice amidst the smoke and confusion of the battlefield. It is a rare quality. Moreover, he was at once a born trainer and a born leader of men, who, in action, filled all around him with his own quiet confidence. That is a still rarer combination and these two improvised battalions were only the first to give proof of it.

* * *

The general advance had been sounded but the remaining Imperial troops refused to budge. Two days later, when Sindhia was again preparing to attack, they went over

en masse to the enemy. He could do nothing but break off the battle and try to extricate himself.

Fortunately the Rajputs made little attempt to follow him up. They were satisfied with having proved that they did not intend to pay tribute to any Mahratta and that it would take a major military operation to extract it. The renegade Ismail Beg was more aggressive. But de Boigne, whose battalions formed the rearguard, conducted the withdrawal with great skill and easily beat off the Mogul cavalry when they came too close. Sindhia was able to retire in good order with his heavy artillery and his baggage-train to his fortress at Gwalior. He had failed to impose his authority. He was in danger of losing face with the Emperor and with his enemies. In one respect only was he satisfied. De Boigne had given him a sample of the sort of troops he wanted and had shown what they could do in action.

IX

On the Plain of Agra

WITH THE single exception of Warren Hastings, Manadaji Sindhia was the ablest man in India when he came to power. His motives were not as pure as those of Hastings or of his successor, Lord Cornwallis, for it was personal ambition alone which supplied his driving-force. In political subtlety he was not the equal of Nana Farnavis, but as a combination of soldier and statesman, even the English admitted that he was unsurpassed.

Fifth and illegitimate son of a family which may have been of noble origin but had fallen in the world, his grandfather being no more than a *Patel* or village manager, he was the last of his line, his four elder brothers having died earlier or on the field of Panipat.

In that great battle, fought outside Delhi in January, 1761, the Mahrattas had suffered one of the most disastrous defeats in history at the hands of the invading Afghans. They lost 40,000 prisoners, all of whom were butchered on the spot. Grant Duff estimates that, of the force of 300,000, including camp-followers, which set out on the campaign, nearly 200,000 perished. Napoleon lost 500,000 in the retreat from Moscow but most of the Mahrattas died in an afternoon.

Cut down by a gigantic Afghan trooper as he fled and crippled by a blow on the knee which left him lame for life, Sindhia was robbed and his horse taken but the Afghan spared him. Even so he would have died but for the arrival of a Muslim water-carrier who put him across his bullock and led him to safety. It was characteristic of Sindhia, who never forgot a service (or an injury), that Rana Khan the *bhisti* was thenceforward treated as "my brother." He rose to be a general officer, and an efficient one, in Sindhia's army.

Sindhia was now just over fifty, rather corpulent because of his game leg but strong and active. He was unusually dark in complexion, with a face full of amiability and intelligence. Good humoured if quick tempered, he was frank and unaffected in his manners and had a natural fund of high spirits. Though vindictive towards those who had done him an injury, he was not a cruel man and was known as an excellent and indulgent master. Only to officers who showed cowardice in battle was he merciless. "To all others his favour was equal, solely apportioned to merit, without regard to creed, caste or colour." For luxury he cared nothing and was simple and abstemious in his habits. Better educated than most of his class, able to read and write, with a colloquial knowledge of Persian and Urdu (both foreign languages to Mahrattas), he was a good accountant and a good administrator but, having picked his subordinates, left detail to them. When he had pledged his word, as he did to Hastings, he kept it scrupulously. The English, as Hastings predicted, had nothing to fear from him.

From Panipat Sindhia learned one lesson. Though the defeat of the Mahrattas was largely due to their abandoning their traditional mode of fighting and being enticed into a

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set-piece battle, there were some hours when the issue hung in the balance. Two hundred guns of which they disposed and a division of picked infantry were well handled by a Muslim soldier of fortune who had acquired some knowledge of French discipline in southern India under Bussy. Discipline almost saved the day. Had the troops had French officers it would probably have done so. Sindhia had himself served against the French in the south and although Panipat seemed to the majority of the Mahrattas to prove that medieval methods of warfare were still the best, he was not of that opinion. It was more science and more discipline, not less, he concluded, that would turn the scale in the future. That was why he had engaged de Boigne.

* * *

After Sindhia's enforced withdrawal, the renegade Ismail Beg constituted himself the champion of Muslim rule in northern India. But to build up an anti-Mahratta coalition he was ready to ally himself with the Hindu Rajputs. This having been arranged, he moved in to invest Agra.

From its proximity to Delhi, it was essential that Sindhia should retain at least the fortress. During the retreat he had had the foresight to reinforce the garrison and to send one of his best generals, Lakwa Dada, to take charge of the defence. It was well that he did so. For Lakwa Dada, a friend of the English, a Brahmin whose nature, said William Palmer, "for mildness and moderation exceeds that of any Mahratta I know," had, in the event, to defend the fort for nine months more against repeated attacks.

Nor was the redoubtable Ismail Beg the only assailant. There now appears on the scene another actor, into whose part, brief though it was, an Indian Shakespeare might have

written all the brutality, the cold cruelty and the desperate scheming that have been charged to Richard III. But for Ghulam Kadir there can be no apologist. The deed for which he is remembered was more vile than could be shown on any stage. All that can be said in extenuation of his insensate violence is that he had been brutally treated when a boy, tortured and emasculated, and that it may be doubted whether he was wholly sane.

A Rohilla¹ landowner and petty chieftain, he saw his chance of plunder, collected his troops and offered his services to his fellow-Muslim, Ismail Beg. Before joining him, however, he drove out the Mahratta garrison of Delhi and occupied the city with his own men. For the moment he left the Emperor unmolested in the citadel. Then he reduced the important town of Aligarh and in April, 1788, temporarily suspending the siege of Agra, Ismail Beg and he moved out against Sindhia, advancing to relieve the garrison.

Once again the day was saved by de Boigne and by a Frenchman, Lestineau, commanding a force of Jats, who, being Hindus, had come to Sindhia's help against the Muslims. (Religion was reinforced by his timely cession of territory to them.) The action which followed was Lalsot over again. De Boigne's two battalions and Lestineau's infantry repelled all attacks, though both Ismail Beg and Ghulam Kadir were fanatically brave men and pressed them with determination. This time it was the Mahratta cavalry who cracked and at night the only disciplined troops were compelled to withdraw.

¹ The Rohillas were Afghans or Pathans who had established themselves across the Jumna, north-west of Oudh. Their power had been broken twenty years before by the then Nawab of Oudh with British help, in a war for which Warren Hastings has been much criticised.

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This was another failure. But Sindhia had a stroke of luck. The Sikhs were on the prowl north of Delhi and his old general, Rana Khan, by sending Mahrattas and Jats to their help, persuaded them to fall on the *jagir* of Ghulam Kadir, who hurried north to save his land. With the enemy temporarily divided, Sindhia advanced again to the relief of Agra.

* * *

The battle of Agra was fought on June 18th, 1788 and was one of hard pounding. It is memorable because it was the first of de Boigne's great victories and because the historic setting was spectacular and splendid beyond the dreams of stage-designer or painter of battle-pieces. As Sindhia's troops advanced across the arid plain, they had behind them the still magnificent ruins of the deserted city, Fatehpur-Sikri. In front was the township of white tents that marked Ismail Beg's camp. Beyond it towered the red battlements of the beleaguered fortress. Away to the right the marble dome and pinnacles of the Taj Mahal glittered and sparkled under the summer sun. Lapping the walls of the fort and the base of the Taj Mahal ran the broad waters of the River Jumna, here unfordable. A few miles to the left of the fort, on the Delhi road, neglected but still splendid, stood the tomb of Akbar the Great. Here was to be fought out the future of Hindustan, though "repose for the people of God" was not to be expected, whatever the outcome.

With the river behind him, Ismail Beg could not retreat and had no thought of it. Throughout the long day, in the burning heat that precedes the rains, the battle raged in billows of dust and smoke and the acrid reek of gun-

powder, while Lakwa Dada followed its changing fortunes from the battlements and only the impartial vultures awaited the issue with confidence. Again and again the Mogul cavalry were led in desperate charges by Ismail Beg himself—only to break and dissolve against the rock of de Boigne's two battalions and that of Lestineau.

In the late afternoon their force was spent and de Boigne advanced to the attack, his troops still in close formation, their fire controlled, their discipline unshaken. By sunset, the Mogul army was a beaten rabble, split into small parties seeking to make their way independently towards Delhi. But now the Mahratta cavalry were among them, for this was war as they understood it. On the open plain the Muslims were remorselessly cut down.

As darkness fell, the walls of the fort were lit by the flames from the burning camp, through which wandered the Mahrattas and their camp-followers in search of plunder. The battle was won. But Ismail Beg, twice wounded, had driven his horse into the Jumna when he saw that all was lost and swum the river to safety. On the other side he found Ghulam Kadir, returned from settling with the Sikhs, and together they made their way to Delhi.

* * *

The tragic tale of what happened in Delhi can be quickly told. On July 18th the two confederates entered the palace and were received with every honour by the Emperor. But the insolence of Ghulam Kadir and word of the intended exactions of both disturbed Shah Alam. Too late, he tried to smuggle out an appeal for help to Sindhia. Too late, because Sindhia was unwilling or unable to follow up

his victory until Nana Farnavis sent him reinforcements. Too late, because Ghulam Kadir intercepted the letter.

At an audience with Shah Alam he drew his sword and threatened to cut the Emperor down. Then he confined the royal family to their apartments without food while for three days he ransacked the palace. Disappointed, he became the prey of a delusion, that somewhere within the palace walls was concealed an immense and secret treasure, its hiding-place known only to Shah Alam. On July 29th he sent for the unfortunate old man and had him flogged in his presence. Followed next day the flogging of the imperial princesses. When even the widows of dead sovereigns had been stripped of their jewels and small possessions, they were driven into the streets to starve.

On August 1st, Ghulam Kadir tried kindness. But Shah Alam still had a spark of spirit. "If there is a treasure," he cried, "it must be in my body. Rip me up and see!" On August 10th, Ghulam Kadir sent for him again. First he tortured his children in front of him. Then, when there was still no confession, he had him thrown to the ground and stood taunting him while his Pathans gouged out the Emperor's eyes.

The news of this was too much for Ismail Beg. A few days later, Mahratta troops appeared south of the city. Ismail Beg began to negotiate with Rana Khan, the ex-water-carrier and Sindhia's "brother," who was in command of them. Some weeks passed but on October 11th, the last day of the great Muslim fast of *Muharam*, Ghulam Kadir learned that Ismail Beg had come to terms with Rana Khan and that Mahratta reinforcements were on their way.

After a last attempt to extort the secret of the treasure

from Shah Alam, he sent out of Delhi such loot as he had been able to collect. At nightfall he tried to blow up the powder-magazine of the Red Fort, and taking members of the royal family as hostages, made his way across the river on an elephant. Rana Khan immediately entered the city, took possession of the palace, put out the fire in the powder-magazine and rescued the unfortunate Emperor, whom he treated kindly and with all respect. This time the Mahrattas were welcome; anyone was preferable to the Pathans.

For two months Ghulam Kadir held out in a fort at Meerut. Then, having failed to obtain terms from Sindhia, he slipped away through a sally-port before the final assault. By night he set off at a gallop for his own country of Rohilkhand. In the darkness his horse put its foot in a hole and fell. Unconscious, he was picked up at dawn by peasants. The local *zemindar* or landowner recognised him and handed him over to the pursuing Mahrattas. They confined him closely at Meerut while they awaited Sindhia's orders.

When they came, they were that Ghulam Kadir's eyes were to be put out and his nose and ears cut off. Then he was to be hanged. The orders were obeyed. Mutilated, Ghulam Kadir was hanged on a tree by the roadside. Five boxes, containing his two eyes, his two ears, and his nose, were delivered personally to the Emperor he had blinded.

And the jewels? They were handed over to Lestineau, in charge of the pursuit. Pausing only to draw arrears of pay for his troops, he made off with the money to British territory and eventually to Europe. In 1813 "a strange, ragged individual with grizzled uncombed hair and wild burning eyes," who posed as a mystic, was to be met with in Syria in the circle of Lady Hester Stanhope. He lived

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by sponging on her. This was Lestineau. His son, an officer in Napoleon's Guard, who came in search of him years later, became her lover. The Imperial jewels have never been traced.

★ ★ ★

De Boigne had helped Rana Khan, his superior officer, in the recapture of Delhi. He was present when Sindhia himself restored, with due pomp and ceremony, the blinded Emperor to his throne. On behalf of the Peshwa and himself Sindhia paid homage, with many protestations of loyalty. The Emperor, his civil list restored and the offerings of the faithful flowing in, wrote a Persian poem in which he referred to Sindhia as his son, who would avenge him.

Shah Alam had, in fact, been anxious to abdicate in favour of his real son. There was also an unwritten Islamic law that forbade a blind man to rule. Sindhia, his position confirmed, preferred to deal with what he knew; the young man was reputed to be able and might have a will of his own. With this poor, battered old creature, this intrinsically valueless but essential emblem of authority in his hands, he could rule *de jure* as well as *de facto*. Ismail Beg had come in and made his submission. For the moment he was riding high. There were still, however, the Rajputs to be reckoned with.

X

Interlude in Lucknow

HAVING SHARED in these triumphs, which he alone had made possible, de Boigne said good-bye to the battalions he had trained and led to victory, resigned his fourth commission in four different armies in twenty years and retired as a private citizen to Lucknow.

With the ball at his feet, why did he so abruptly abandon it and walk off to the touch-line? To all appearance, in a fit of pique and wounded professional pride. He had suffered at the hands of Apa Khande Rao in the beginning, to the point of longing to leave him as soon as he could do so "with honour and satisfaction." Yet Apa Khande Rao was not so bad as Mahrattas went and was now by way of being his friend. It was the system which was intolerable.

Much later, de Boigne was to write to Colonel Sir John Murray: "The avarice and parsimony of the Hindoo Cast in general and the Mahrattas in particular . . . will for ever impede the Application of an Allowance to its real purpose . . . The Pundits who have the management of all business at this Court will never put aside their old way of embezzling the half of what is to pass through their

hands, which is so familiar in every transaction that it is not so much as to deserve taking notice of."

Least of all was the soldier's pay sacrosanct. Yet everything depended upon "that animal," as the Duke of Wellington half-affectionately called his British counterpart. The Mahrattas might be expected to pay themselves by looting the country they conquered: a disciplined army could not be created on such conditions. And even Sindhia, though he was capable of great generosity, had a bad name for meanness and was almost as reluctant as Asaf-ud-daulah to part with actual cash. De Boigne was determined that proper arrangements should be made to secure his own pay and that of any troops he commanded. Moreover, he wanted—and felt that he had earned—a much larger command. Two disciplined battalions could turn the scale in a major action. Without them, the battle of Lalsot would have been lost and that of Agra could not have been won. But a couple of thousand men, away from the battlefield, were no more than a corporal's guard in the hordes of Sindhia's army, their commander a very junior officer compared with generals like Rana Khan or Apa Khande Rao himself. De Boigne therefore suggested that the two battalions should be increased to a *campoo* or brigade of 10,000 men, that he should raise and train it, that it should serve directly under him and that pay and expenses should be guaranteed by a *jaidad* or military assignment of territory.

It was not easy for Sindhia to agree. He was too good a soldier to wish to dispense with his discovery. Ever since Panipat he had dreamed of having a disciplined army or at least a stiffening of disciplined troops. The recent battles had proved how right he had been and that in de Boigne

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he had found the man. He knew much more than de Boigne, however, about Mahratta politics and Mahratta jealousies. None too sure whether he could rely on backing from Poona, he might have to depend indefinitely on the troops and generals he already had in hand. To create so strong an independent brigade and put it under a European, to promote a newcomer with three years' service to such heights, would set his generals by the ears. Like most generals they distrusted innovations and believed in the superiority of the strategy and tactics to which they had been brought up. At the moment he could not afford to offend them. De Boigne's proposal was turned down and de Boigne walked out.

In the light of after-events, there can be little doubt that this rupture was rehearsed. For de Boigne was much too shrewd and self-controlled a man to act, in a professional matter, on an impulse. So was Sindhia. And the two parted, temporarily, on the friendliest terms.

* * *

There was someone else beside Sindhia who prompted de Boigne to taste, almost for the first time in his thirty-eight years, the pleasures of civilian life. In Delhi he had formed an association, in eighteenth century parlance, with a young woman whom he himself described as the daughter of a Persian colonel of cavalry, in the service of the Emperor Shah Alam. The identity of the Persian colonel remains a mystery. The daughter has been variously—and wrongly—identified. Thanks to my discovery, in an old uniform-case of de Boigne's in his château at Chambéry, of some letters from Major William Palmer, political agent of Warren Hastings, it can be said with certainty that the mother

came from Lucknow and belonged to a Muslim family which was at least respectable and may have been of some distinction.

The girl to whom de Boigne gave his mother's Christian name of *Hélène* and, as a surname, his own Christian name of "*Benoît*," anglicised into "*Bennet*," which was the form he used himself, was the sister of Bibi Faiz Bakhsh, Sahib ("*Faizun-nissa*"), Begum of Oudh, generally known as William Palmer's second wife. (He had previously married in the West Indies.) When, if ever, Palmer actually married Faiz is uncertain, for her children, born from 1781 onwards, though duly baptised in Calcutta, were described as natural sons. But he certainly lived with her to the end of his life, in 1816, by which time he was a Lieutenant-General. Faiz, who survived him twelve years, lived in Hyderabad until her death with the eldest son, William, known as "*King*" Palmer, founder and head of the prosperous Hyderabad firm of Palmer & Co.

Hélène was the younger sister of Faiz (Palmer usually spelt it "*Fyze*"), and was nineteen years old at this time, Faiz being probably seven or eight years older. What else do we know about her? That Palmer and Faiz, through whom de Boigne must have met her, sent her affectionate messages when they were separated; that she was intelligent and to some extent educated, for she learnt to write her individualistic English with fluency and feeling; that she was of fair complexion, which goes to confirm her half-Persian origin; that she was beautiful and that Queiros, Martin's Portuguese man of affairs, wrote to de Boigne: "You have in your Lady a Treasure, my good friend." It is true that he continued: "She has no will of her own and I never heard a woman be contented with so little,"

but it is clear that he intended this as a compliment. Hélène was at any rate of a different class to most of the "girls" with whom Europeans were accustomed to provide themselves in India and everyone who met her treated her with the respect due to de Boigne's wife. Her first child, a daughter called by the Indian fairy-tale name of "Banu", was born in Lucknow in 1789.

In the cold weather, from mid-October to mid-March, there is no more pleasant station in India than Lucknow, that "curious and splendid city" as Sir Henry Lawrence described it, before the tide of the Mutiny swept through the streets, with its "gilded domes surmounted by the crescent; tall, slender pillars; lofty colonnades; houses that look as if they had been translated from eighteenth century Regent Street; wrought-iron railings and balustrades; gardens and fountains and cypress trees; elephants and camels and horses; gilt litters and smart English barouches." No wonder that contemporary travellers compared it variously with Moscow, with Dresden and with Constantinople. For though the gilt has faded, the charm remains.

What more agreeable place to set up housekeeping with a beautiful and submissive nineteen-year-old, to whom de Boigne was sincerely, even deeply attached? The society, too, was agreeable. William Palmer and Hélène's sister paid frequent visits from Agra. On the spot, apart from Colonel Polier, were Claud Martin and his lovely Lise.

Martin had just completed "a large and elegant mansion on the banks of the Gumti, the river that flows by Lucknow. The house had the appearance of a fortified castle and was, indeed, constructed with a view to defence, with draw-bridges, loop-holes and turrets and with water, when desired, all round. . . . The most handsome room was

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one which he had built over the river itself, the exterior wall resting upon pillars placed nearly in the middle of the Gumti, whose stream thus flowed through the house." (The piers on which the pillars were set may still be seen when the river is low, or could be when I was last in Lucknow.)

Here the hospitable little Frenchman used to give breakfast parties, to which invitations were much sought after. In the house had been living, until just recently, John Zoffany, who, thanks to Martin, had been appointed Court Painter to the Nawab and had found time to paint charming portraits of Martin with Lise and of Palmer with Fyze.¹ Over the breakfast-table could be gathered all the "gup" or gossip of the place (the word was current throughout the British occupation of India), and Martin would recount the latest eccentricities of his royal master. How, for example, dissuaded by his boon companion, Colonel Mordaunt, from baking alive in an oven a barber who had had the misfortune to cut him, he had compromised by attaching the barber to one of the balloons with which the ingenious Martin was then experimenting. Colonel Polier could speak to this, for, borne rapidly aloft and carried off at a great pace across country, the unhappy barber had come down on Polier's property and taken to his heels, the first to make a balloon ascent in India.

But de Boigne was not the man to spend his time in "coffee-housing" or to forget the world for any young woman. He had accumulated some capital in the service of Sindhia and Martin offered to take him into partnership and show him how to invest it.

¹ On his way back to England Zoffany was shipwrecked off the Andaman Islands. Lots having been drawn by the starving survivors, a young seaman was duly eaten. Zoffany may thus be said with some confidence to have been the first and perhaps the last Royal Academician to become a cannibal.

Martin himself was immensely busy and correspondingly prosperous. Still high in the favour of the Nawab-Vizier, he stood as well with the new Governor-General, Lord Cornwallis, as he had with Warren Hastings. Unofficially he acted as agent for the Bengal Government. On the side, he was doing better than ever with his saltpetre and indigo. It was in the forward buying and selling of indigo that he advised de Boigne to employ his money. The advice was good, for it laid the foundations of his fortune and paid him handsome dividends throughout his time in India and long afterwards.

Thus, where the English adventurers, now banished from Lucknow, had gambled and looked only to a quick "rake-off" from the Nawab, de Boigne settled down in Martin's house, which was also their office, to correspondence and accounts—and to shrewd speculation on a large scale.

An aptitude for business is not so rare amongst professional soldiers as might be supposed but de Boigne's commercial flair was inherited from his father and grandfather. Trade was no mystery to him. Odd letters to Martin and Queiros show that he knew all about bills payable and receivable, discounts, demurrage and the like. His father had done business with Poland; he had heard such things discussed as a boy. He kept meticulous accounts; he expected value for money. He was, in short, a careful man and quick on a rupee. But he was not a mean one, as was shown by his readiness to pay his troops out of his own pocket. What was remarkable was that, though his growing wealth meant much to him, no thought of it was ever to hold him back in action.

The partnership might have continued indefinitely, until one or other or both decided to retire to Europe, like so

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many " nabobs " from India. There was nothing that Martin wanted more than to keep his friend with him and make him rich. Though he was so sociable and hospitable and amusing that he had a host of friends, amongst whom both Hastings and Cornwallis counted themselves, there was none whom the jolly little man found as congenial or admired so much as de Boigne—ten years his junior. But suddenly, late in the summer of 1789, came a summons from Sindhia. If de Boigne would return and raise his *campoo* of ten battalions, he would not have to complain about conditions, said Sindhia's envoy.

The reasons why Sindhia was determined to secure de Boigne on almost any terms are plain. He had two main enemies. The first was Ismail Beg. Disgusted by Ghulam Kadir's brutality to the Emperor and the royal princesses, disappointed, perhaps, with his share of the loot of Delhi, he had temporarily thrown in his hand with the Mahrattas. Sindhia made a treaty with him and even assigned to him valuable *jaidads* or grants of territory. The string attached to this generous gesture was that they were already in the possession of somebody else and Ismail Beg would have to recover them by force of arms before he could enjoy them. The object was to keep him occupied and out of mischief while Sindhia settled with his second set of enemies, the Rajput Rajas of Jaipur and Jodhpur.

It was exceedingly unlikely from the beginning that the stratagem would work—or that Ismail Beg had any intention of respecting the treaty. Some months before, Palmer had summed up the position very clearly. " Should the Rajputs support Ismail Beg," he wrote, " as it is evidently for their interest and security to do, the suppression will hardly be effected by any force the Mahrattas can bring against him.

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He is certainly aware of his danger and exerting himself to provide against it. Should he be subdued, the next object of Sindhia's jealousy and vengeance would be the Raja of Jaipur, against whom he seems to be actuated by both these passions to such a degree as to determine [him] to gratify them or perish in the attempt. His success, however, would be very doubtful in the undertaking as the Raja of Jodhpur will never abandon an interest with which his own is inseparably connected and their united force seems to be an overmatch for that of the Mahrattas. It would be prudent in Sindhia to come to a reasonable accommodation with these Rajas, if he intends to settle Hindustan as a permanent and productive Government, unless he could obtain the assistance of ours in support of his views."

The Rajas were also very well aware of their danger and exerting themselves, so far as they were capable of exertion, to provide against it. On March 1st, 1790, the Raja of Jaipur, as a forlorn hope, wrote personally to Lord Cornwallis. Denouncing the tyrannical and treacherous Mahrattas, who were planning to extend their power and their mischief over the whole country, he declared that the design uppermost in their minds was "to become inimical towards the English and light the torch of war in that quarter." Sindhia only made deceitful professions of friendship because he was uneasy about the Rajputs. If ever he came to an understanding with them, the Governor-General would find that in that very instant he would stir up the dust of warfare against the English. But if a firm and friendly alliance were established between the English and the two Rajas, himself and his brother of Jodhpur, "so that in case of need the Rajputs will join your Lordship and your Lordship will assist them," then they could all

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jointly labour to arrange the affairs of Hindustan according to the wishes of the Governor-General. The machinations of Sindhia and the Mahrattas would thus be defeated.

The Raja was unsuccessful. Lord Cornwallis knew very well that "to become inimical towards the English" was so far from being the design uppermost in Sindhia's mind that he had never seriously considered it. It was the bleating of the Rajput kids which was exciting the tiger. Moreover Cornwallis had long since decided that neither the orders of the Court of Directors nor existing Acts of Parliament permitted him to interfere in the affairs of upper India and he had refused to come to the rescue of the Emperor when he was in the power of Ghulam Kadir. The veiled threat that the Rajputs might reach an understanding with Sindhia which would free him to turn on the English did not alarm him at all. He realised what sort of an understanding Sindhia proposed to reach with the Rajas of Jaipur and Jodhpur.

As for Sindhia, he was too good a soldier not to see the military situation as Palmer saw it. Without disciplined troops, and more of them than before, he could not hope to defeat the combined forces of Ismail Beg and the Rajputs. He now had none at all. Because Lestineau had absconded to Europe with their eight months' arrears of pay, de Boigne's two battalions and Lestineau's own were in a state of almost open mutiny. Something must be done quickly and there was only one man who could do it.

Whether de Boigne had expected this offer or not, he did not hesitate to accept it. At a single meeting at Muttra, where Sindhia was encamped, the bargain was struck. There was no haggling. De Boigne was to be given a completely free hand and graded as a General on Rs.4000

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a month (£500). As before he was to recruit and train his troops and select European officers for them without interference. There would be no disputes about pay, for territory would be assigned to secure it and this territory would be under his own management. There would be no disputes about anything, as it turned out. Between the Mahratta chief and his Savoyard general, confidence, friendship and, soon, affection remained unclouded until Sindhia's death.

De Boigne's friends had no doubt that he would be equal to the occasion. Martin wrote a note to him at Muttra, as soon as he heard that agreement had been reached with Sindhia. "I think you cannot fail to be a great name in the history of India. The balance of power will be held by you. *Quelle gloire de voir à vos pieds des Empereurs Mogols, des Princes et des Princesses chercher votre amitié et Dieu seay que de plus.*"¹

"You are now, my friend, moving in your proper element: nature cast you for a soldier," wrote Dr. Blane, English surgeon to Asaf-ud-daulah and destined to be another life-long friend. "You have firmness, perseverance and virtue to qualify you for many professions but you must know . . . that your bent is to the profession of Arms."

Sindhia was fortunate, wrote Major-General Sir John Malcolm later on, "to have the aid of a man of no ordinary description . . . [whose] military genius was to raise him to a greater if not a more consolidated power than any Indian prince had obtained since the death of Aurungzeb."

* * *

De Boigne had little time and little enough on which to

¹ "What glory to see at your feet Mogul Emperors, Princes and Princesses seeking your friendship and God knows what else."

build. The first task was to restore his own two battalions and that of Lestineau. Sindhia was on the point of letting loose the Mahratta cavalry against them. De Boigne obtained permission to handle the mutiny himself. The three battalions were induced to parade before him without arms. He formally disbanded them—and re-enlisted them on the spot under new conditions, with a payment of half their arrears. Only the officers who had encouraged them to mutiny were cashiered.

Recruits came flocking in from Oudh, from Rohilkhand and the Doab.¹ There were plenty who had had some military experience, if only in the ragtag and bobtail armies that had for years been making northern India a desert. The best of the N.C.O.s from the old battalions were split up amongst the new formations. Officers began to come to hand. George Sangster was back as, in effect, director of ordnance services. There was John Hessing, a fifty-year-old Dutchman who had commanded one of the original battalions and was too old a soldier to have involved himself in a mutiny. There was Robert Sutherland, who had been cashiered from the Black Watch but knew his business. There was Captain Dugeon, a Savoyard, born in a château near Chambéry, a man of good family, whose brother was a general in the Sardinian army. There was a Colonel Pedron, who joined as a subaltern, though he had been a subaltern in the army of Asaf-ud-daulah thirty years before. There were a couple of young Englishmen, one of whom, Lieutenant Roberts, must have been a former regular officer, since he was at once given a battalion.

¹ The Doab, which means the country between the rivers, lay between the Ganges and the Jumna and extended from Allahabad to Meerut, thus bordering the territories of the Nawab-Vizier of Oudh and the Rohilla country across the Ganges.

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Above all, there was Pierre Cuiller, destined to become famous under his *nom de guerre* of Perron and to succeed de Boigne. The son of a weaver and almost entirely self-educated, he had run away from home as a boy to work in a cannon factory at Nantes and had subsequently come to India as a private soldier. Perron had already fought with de Boigne at Agra and was the ideal subordinate, a first-rate trainer of troops, a good disciplinarian, a brave leader, a man of ability and immense energy. He, too, was given a battalion.

The general level was by no means high. Reporting from Sindhia's headquarters to Lord Cornwallis on the activities of "a M. de Boigne," and discreetly concealing that M. de Boigne was his friend and, in the sight of God, his brother-in-law, William Palmer writes: "A number of European officers are attached to this corps and several who have gained experience and reputation in the country service; these are all foreigners. But I am sorry to observe that several British subjects have found their way into it, some of whom are worthy of better service and others are a disgrace to any service." Dr. Blane was even more outspoken to de Boigne himself. "Your best friends are apprehensive," he wrote, "that even the Genius of a Caesar or a Zenophon could not draw much credit or much use from the spurious and motley assemblage of *Franks* you have collected."

Dr. Blane had the contemporary Englishman's distrust of the French: de Boigne had to work with the material at hand. At least he had in the background the invaluable Martin to look after the "logistics" and Martin at once threw himself into the business as if it had been his own. "I have told Queiros," he writes, "not to bother you with

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affairs of commerce; I will give him all the necessary orders. . . . It is unfortunate that your uniforms have not yet arrived. I know very well that it makes all the difference to troops to be properly turned out."

Martin soon discovered the missing uniforms and before the end of October his agents in Calcutta, Hamilton and Aberdeen, report that they have despatched up-country Mr. Shippard, a bandmaster, and Mr. Leander, a musician. They have unfortunately not been able to recruit any French horn players but as Mr. Leander is a competent musician and brings with him several sorts of instruments, he will soon be able to train a band of boys, the French horn being particularly easy to play. In de Boigne's uniform-case there survives a plaintive little note from Mr. Shippard to say that he and Mr. Leander have reached Nudzuffgar with the instruments and how are they to get on from there? What happened to Mr. Shippard and Mr. Leander, one wonders, and did they ever regret having joined the army?

That uniform-case, identical with those I had recently brought back from India and in which I was the first to burrow for many a long year, yielded up several letters dating from this period. There are two of November, 1789, congratulating de Boigne. James Browne, now a Colonel, writes from Calcutta the same month: "The obliging offer you make me of sending me such material Intelligence as may occur I am very thankful for and beg you will have the Friendship to do so: independent of the Pleasure I shall receive from reading the Papers myself, there are some very respectable Personages in England who do me the Honour to correspond with me on those subjects and to rely upon me for real information respecting Hindostany Politics in

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the Western parts of India . . ." It is not difficult to identify Hastings among them.

An even more interesting and surprising exhibit is, however, a letter from William Palmer, dated March 13th, 1790, from Sindhia's camp. De Boigne's brigade was then about to take the field. Only six weeks earlier Palmer had written to Lord Cornwallis criticising M. de Boigne's officers and remarking that if the Governor-General does not wish English officers to enter his service, his lordship will doubtless take such measures as he thinks fit to discourage them. It is a dispassionate report which certainly reveals no special partiality for de Boigne.

But how does Palmer write to de Boigne himself? The contrast with his official communications is startling. "*I trust,*" writes Palmer, "*that our separation will not be long and I wish for few things more ardently than to pass the remainder of my life in your society. . . . Your sentiments and disposition are such as to engage my everlasting affection and will secure to you the esteem of all men who have any sense of Honour and Probity. I hope I shall always deserve the good opinion and regard which I know you entertain for me.*"

Palmer goes on to mention a secret offer by Sindhia to the Governor-General to take a personal part in the war against Tipu Sahib in Mysore if the English will engage in the defence of his country should he be attacked in his absence. He does not expect this offer to be accepted and asks de Boigne not to disclose it to anyone. "I will acquaint you of the progress and conclusion of the business as I know it," he adds. He ends: "Fyze sends her affectionate salaams to you and her sister and is much affected by her disappointment of seeing you both."

The political inferences are obvious. Palmer was a man

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of integrity. He was an able and experienced Intelligence officer. He had the confidence of the Governor-General and corresponded with him direct. If, then, he felt free to disclose state secrets to de Boigne, it was because he had no doubt about his discretion—or about that “most perfect attachment to the English Government” of which his friend had long ago assured Lord Macartney. De Boigne was, in fact, a Glubb Pasha of his day. He owed allegiance primarily to Sindhia, with an underlying loyalty to the British cause.

It is the glimpse of him, seen through another's eyes, that brings him suddenly to life. No early portrait of him exists. Few of his personal letters from this period have survived. Look at the portrait in this book, study those stern and rather wooden features. It is easy to attribute to him all the conventional military virtues. He is clearly a strong, capable and resolute man. One can picture him as a Swiss or Swedish or Scottish captain of mercenaries, with a high standard of professional conduct. The one quality with which it is difficult to credit him is charm. Yet, “everlasting affection” . . . “I wish for few things more ardently than to pass the rest of my life in your society. . . .”

Palmer was fifty, eleven years de Boigne's senior. If he and the others could write in such terms, it cannot be doubted that de Boigne was no mere military paragon but a warm-hearted and eminently likeable man. Because of what happened to him when he reached Palmer's age, the point is worth making here.

* * *

To produce two disciplined battalions in just over six

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months had been no small feat of improvisation. To recruit, clothe, arm and train eleven battalions of infantry and their ancillary artillery and cavalry and to have them fit to march past Sindhia in less than five months was something hardly attempted until the days of Kitchener's First Army. Probably the results were about the same. The troops were "green" but they looked well, marched well, were fit and willing to fight. Only by three months of intensive drill "on the square" and endless tactical exercises under the eyes of de Boigne himself could this have been achieved. Fortunately, the drill was standardised on the European pattern. Fortunately, too, the battalions were not to be called upon to fight German regulars or even the British-trained sepoy of the East India Company's army, under British officers. They were not yet up to strength, for Palmer reported to the Governor-General in January, 1790, that the corps consists of "near 5000 sepoy, chiefly clothed, armed and disciplined in the manner of ours, eighty pieces of artillery served by European gunners and 350 Hindustani horse."

This was a fraction of what de Boigne later had under him. Nevertheless, it made a brave show when Sindhia took the salute. To the sound of French horns, the infantry went by in scarlet with black leather accoutrements and coxcombs in their blue turbans. The cavalry, well-mounted since de Boigne had personally selected the horses, was in green with red turbans and cummerbunds. The heavy artillery was drawn by bullocks, eight to a gun, the light two-pounders or "Gallopers" by two horses, tandem, the lead horse ridden by a gunner with another on the gun. There followed "tumbrels," drawn by twelve bullocks, to carry the heavy ammunition and camel-drawn limbers

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to bring up the light. The contents of each and the proportion of grape-shot to ball were exactly laid down. More camels came behind carrying tents for the wounded (a notable innovation) but only on a field-service scale, for this brigade was to be a mobile force, not a travelling township. There was also a doctor and a surgeon, whom Martin had sent up and for whom he had provided suitable light transport.

Sindhia was satisfied—so much so that Palmer reported that “perhaps his principal reliance for the ultimate success of his schemes is upon the corps formed by and under the command of M. de Boigne.” At the end of March, after two months more of intensive training, the army moved from Muttra to base itself for the moment on Sindhia’s great fortress of Gwalior.

XI

General of the Mahrattas

BEFORE THE end of February, what Sindhia had hoped against hope to avoid or at least postpone until he had dealt with the Raja of Jaipur, was already coming about. "It is almost certain," wrote Palmer to Cornwallis from Sindhia's camp on February 21st, 1790, "that the Rajputs and Ismail Beg have at length formed a confederacy against him and that they will not wait his attack. Ismail Beg has already invaded the country of the (Jat) Raja, the firmest and most useful of Sindhia's allies and whom he must unavoidably assist . . . He must now provide to oppose their accumulated force." Palmer thought that the condition of his affairs was critical.

So, indeed, it would have been had Sindhia's enemies acted together and at once. But the two Rajput rulers were jealous of each other, indolent even in face of so imminent a danger and suspicious of the Muslim, Ismail Beg, the only man in the party with any enterprise. Thus week after week slipped by and the confederacy existed only on paper. It was the beginning of May when Sindhia's army left Gwalior and it was on May 10th that the covering screen of Mahratta cavalry reported that Ismail Beg was strongly entrenched at Patan about 80 miles north of Jaipur.

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There was still plenty of time for the Jaipur forces to join him and Jodhpur was also within easy striking distance. But Jaipur only supplied Ismail Beg with 6000 Rathor cavalry and Jodhpur did not move at all. Even so, it was an overwhelmingly superior force.

Like Lord Randolph Churchill's "damned dots," numbers may normally be ignored in accounts of Indian battles. The real fighting, when there is any, is usually done by a few: those hordes of prancing horsemen, those impressive masses of untrained infantry, a sudden breath of panic, the death of a leader who inspires confidence, are often enough to disperse them like snow upon the desert. Plassey, where Clive was faced by 34,000 infantry, 15,000 cavalry and fifty-three heavy guns and gained the victory at a cost of *four* Europeans killed, *twenty* wounded and *four* missing, with total casualties of ninety-six, having fired only 500 rounds of round-shot from his own guns, is the classic example. Of all the decisive battles of the world it was the greatest travesty of one and Clive was sensitive about the figures.

When, therefore, one says that Ismail Beg had some 13,000 cavalry, 30,000 infantry, including 5000 regular troops and 4000 hillmen, fighting in their native country, and 130 guns, the total might mean much or little: only the casualty list and the accounts of reliable eyewitnesses can give us a picture of what really took place. Here we are fortunate enough to have, not a dispatch, for dispatches are considered and sometimes doctored documents, but the long letter which de Boigne found time to write to a friend within four days of the battle.¹ It is dated June 24th, 1790, "Camp at Patan."

¹ It was published in the *Calcutta Chronicle* of July, 29th, 1790. The name of the friend is not known but it may well have been Colonel James Browne.

De Boigne begins by describing how he had tried to harass and surprise the enemy but had been unable to do so because of their almost impregnable position and their great superiority in numbers and artillery. (It seems that the usually impetuous Ismail Beg had spent the best part of a month waiting for a propitious day—and perhaps for the end of the Muslim fast of Ramadan on June 12th that year. It could be no fun to fight while fasting from dawn to sunset.)

“At last, tired out with vexation, I determined to march from our ground in three columns, so as to form the line from the centre of each with ease and celerity. In that way I advanced to a little more than gun-shot distance, where I formed our little army, consisting of two lines and a reserve, with the Mahratta horse a little in the rear and on our flanks.

“After waiting a good part of the day with impatient hopes to see them march against us, as they had threatened, a few Mahratta horse began to skirmish with the enemy’s right wing, consisting of horse, which shortly increased from 5000 to 6000 but they were soon beat off.

“I was now encouraged to see if something better could not be done from our side and in order to induce them to come out from their stronghold I ordered the first line to advance. After a warm cannonade of about an hour from both sides, the enemy not appearing to come out, I still advanced, till we came within reach of grape-shot. Then, halting, we gave and received from each gun nearly forty rounds of grape, which made it a warm business, we being in the plain and they in their trenches.

“The evening was now far advanced and seeing at the

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same time numerous bodies of the enemy's cavalry in motion and ready to fall on us if they could find an opening, I thought it prudent to move on rather quicker, which we did, till the firing of platoons began. But we had already lost such a number of people, principally *Clashies* (native artillerymen), that those remaining were unable to drag the guns on any farther. I therefore gave immediate orders to storm their lines, sword in hand, which was as soon executed, upon which the enemy, not relishing at all this close fighting, gave way on all sides, infantry as well as cavalry, leaving us in possession of all their guns, baggage, bazaar, elephants and everything else.

"The day being now closed, put an end to the slaughter of the enemy, which must have been very considerable if we had had an hour's more daylight. However, it was a complete victory. Their cavalry, after losing about 2000 men and horses, saved themselves by flight; their infantry, who could not run so fast, took refuge in the town of Patan, strongly fortified. But in the morning they thought proper to give themselves up and surrendered to me all their arms, colours, etc. Nine battalions and irregular troops, making above 12,000 men, are now prisoners-of-war; I have promised to allow them a safe guard to conduct them on the other side of the Jumna."

After giving details of Ismail Beg's force, de Boigne continues: "My Brigade was 10,000 strong. The Mahratta cavalry stood on our flanks as spectators. They began the skirmish, in which they had only six men killed and forty wounded. Had it not been for two battalions of mine, who changed front when the enemy's

cavalry was charging ours, the Mahrattas would have seen fine play.

"Our victory is astonishing! A complete victory gained by a handful of men over such a number, in such a strong position! It may surprise you when I say that in less than three hours' time, 12,000 rounds and 1500 grape-shots were fired by us and thirty rounds from each musket and by the enemy much more, as they had two guns to one of ours.

"During all the engagement I was on horseback, encouraging our men. Thank God I have realised all the sanguine expectations of Sindhia; my officers in general have behaved well, to them I am a great deal indebted for the fortune of the day.

"We have had 129 men killed and 472 wounded, the enemy not more, perhaps not so much as they were entrenched, but they have lost a vast number of cavalry. I have taken 107 pieces of artillery, 6000 stands of arms, 252 colours, fifteen elephants (amongst whom are Ismail's five), 200 camels, 513 horses and above 3000 oxen. I intend to send the whole to Sindhia as soon as it may be practicable. All their camp was burnt and destroyed—they have saved nothing but their lives.

"The terror of our arms alone put us in possession of the town of Patan, in which the troops found a good deal of plunder and near 2000 horses. It would have required at any other time a month to take it, its fortifications being very strong and defended by three hills, close to each other. The place was never taken before."

This soldierly account, the casualties and the expenditure

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of ammunition make it clear that Patan was no sham fight. It is supplemented and confirmed by an officer who also took part. "The General's courage and judgment on this occasion were equally conspicuous . . . Our success affords a strong proof of the amazing power of discipline under a brave and skilful commander."

Ismail Beg, as always, was in the forefront of the battle. But, as at Agra, when he saw that it was lost, he took to his horse and was not among the 12,000 prisoners. Sindhia had awaited the result in his camp. When "the welcome and happy news of the glorious victory" reached him, he wrote at once to Lord Cornwallis to inform him. "May the victory be glorious to all my friends," he ended. "Further particulars your lordship may learn from Major Palmer's letter." To de Boigne he was more than complimentary. De Boigne kept his letter in his uniform-case and after so many years Sindhia's gratitude and the exultant high spirits in which he wrote are still moving.

"My valiant Sir,

Your excellent service and dauntless heroism are already imprinted upon my mind. The news-letter furnished me with the full detail of your bravery and indomitable fortitude—more than your dispatch contained. Your having spared the lives and property of the vanquished upon conditions is approved by us. Your promise is equal to our own. It was a glorious opportunity to obtain bullocks for the artillery. . . ."

Sindhia made only one criticism, that de Boigne had compelled the Mahratta soldiery to restore the plundered effects:

"Which has irritated the men and in all probability they will lodge complaints against you to us. Never mind. *My brave and faithful Sir, you may fully set your mind at ease that anyone's writing against you will not be credited. Believe that our admiration and kindness towards you is daily on the ascendancy. . . .*"

The proof was soon forthcoming, for de Boigne's pay was raised immediately to Rs.6000 (£750) and soon afterwards to Rs.10,000 (£1250) a month. But this, as will be seen, was only a beginning. Meanwhile Palmer reported to the Governor-General that the victory seemed to have been complete and decisive. "No effectual resistance to the Mahratta power in Hindustan can now be expected and it is probable from the character of Sindhia that he will push his success to the utmost extremity of ambition and revenge against the Rajas of Jaipur and Jodhpur and either utterly exterminate them or reduce them to a state of complete imbecility [*sic*]."

Jaipur was in fact out of the ring and the Raja of Jodhpur was a dying man. But when de Boigne was invited to negotiate with Jaipur personally and alone, Sindhia forbade him. "This news has caused me much anxiety and uneasiness of mind," he wrote. "Since you are the strong right hand of this Government, you are apprised that the treachery of the family of the Raja of Jaipur is notorious. My advice to you is not to go to Jaipur. Remember, you occupy one of the highest ranks in the Empire. It is unbecoming for a nobleman like yourself to negotiate personally; it is the duty of a *vakil*.¹ Your bounden duty is to preserve your exalted dignity . . . Be very careful of treachery, especially

¹ An attorney but also used of an ambassador or plenipotentiary.

of the Rajas of Jaipur and Jodhpur, they are never to be trusted. . . .”

De Boigne had perhaps hardly had time to realise how important a person he had become: nevertheless, he obeyed orders and sent a *vakil*. An unknown friend at Sindhia's court reminded him of the risk and he kept this letter, too. “His Royal Highness the Maharajah speaks of you in the highest terms possible. You may rest assured of early promotion, which entirely depends upon your own exertions and the goodwill of His Highness . . . Be on the alert and protect yourself against enemies. . . .”

The Raja of Jodhpur knew only too well that he was next on the list. What was to be done? Might it not be possible to buy off de Boigne, whom he wrongly supposed to be just a European adventurer, with no more principles than others he had known? It was worth trying and he sent secretly to offer the great fortress of Ajmer, the key to the country, lying midway between Jaipur and Jodhpur, and the land for fifty miles round, as a personal fief if de Boigne would desert Sindhia. There was a certain grim humour in the reply. Sindhia, said de Boigne, had already made him a present of both Jaipur and Jodhpur. The Raja would not be so unreasonable as to expect him to exchange them for Ajmer.

In the middle of August he proceeded to invest the fortress. A fortnight later he had come no nearer to reducing it. “Our guns, from the very great elevation they are placed at and the distance, make no impression upon it,” wrote one of his officers from “Ajimere Camp” on September 1st, 1790, in a letter published in a Calcutta newspaper. “The narrow paths which lead to the fort are so defended by nature that a few large stones thrown down

must carry everything before them. The noise they make in rolling I can compare to nothing but thunder. Indeed, I am afraid we must turn the blockade into a siege, as they have six months' water and a year's provisions in the fort. I fancy we shall divide our forces, leaving some here and the rest proceeding to Merta, where the enemy have taken the field."

* * *

At Patan, the Rajputs had been not only defeated but, in their own eyes disgraced. The Rathor cavalry had left plenty of dead on the field but they had been driven from it in the end like sheep. What rankled with the Rajputs, as inordinately proud as they were physically brave, was that a rhyme was already current in their own country in which they were accused of having thrown away at Patan all the attributes of manhood—horse, shoes, turban, moustachios, the traditional "Sword of Marwar"—and thus sunk to the level of women. Such humiliation was intolerable and the Raja of Jodhpur called up every Rathor between fourteen and sixty years of age. Meanwhile Ismail Beg, equally humiliated by the defeat of his own Muslims, had been collecting another army and was also on the march towards Ajmer to join the Rajputs in wiping out the shame of Patan.

Merta, the assembly-point, was a large city surrounded by a thick mud rampart and parapet thirty feet high. It lies on high ground some forty miles to the north-west of Ajmer, in the centre of a vast grassy plain, already well-watered by the blood of many previous battles. For what happened there is no lack of documentation: we have detailed accounts from both sides.

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As de Boigne's officer had predicted, he left a couple of thousand Mahratta cavalry to mask the fortress of Ajmer and behind a screen of the rest moved forward towards Merta. The weather was excessively hot, because the rains had failed. There was difficulty in getting the artillery across a sandy river-bed and he might have been in trouble had the Rajputs attacked and driven in his cavalry screen. They preferred, however, to remain on their position, awaiting the arrival of Ismail Beg, while their commanders fortified themselves with opium, as was the habit of the Rajput nobles.

On the night of the eighth/ninth September, de Boigne got his guns across. On the morning of the ninth he advanced slowly, because of the heavy going in the sand beyond the river. Towards noon he was within sight of the enemy and came under shell-fire. Lakwa Dada, the defender of Agra and the nominal commander-in-chief, was all for attacking at once. Because of the heat, because the troops had had a tiring march after a night with little sleep and because darkness, as at Patan, would prevent him exploiting the victory he expected, de Boigne refused. He preferred to spend the afternoon making a personal "recce" with a view to attacking at first light next day, when his men would be rested and there would be a good chance of surprising the Rajputs, whose leaders would be sleeping off the effects of opium.

"The event showed his prescience," commented a Calcutta paper. "He marched *au point du jour* and surprised the enemy, who were asleep." After a brief bombardment with grape-shot, the infantry advanced and stormed the first line. The Jodhpur infantry, said to be 100,000 strong, began to break.

A French officer, bearing the historic name of Rohan, nearly threw the advantage away. Commanding the three battalions on the right of the line, he went on without orders, lost touch and left a wide gap. The leaders of the Rathor cavalry, 30,000 of them, had now come to their senses and saw their chance. The chief of Alwar, who had only been aroused from his opium dreams with much difficulty, led the Rathors forward at a gallop, crying "Remember Patan!" Rohan's three battalions were caught in the open before they had time to reform and were quickly overrun. Then, left shoulders up, the Rathors turned in on de Boigne's main body and, completely surrounding it, charged it from both flanks and from the rear.

"But General de Boigne's foresight and incomparable presence of mind were the means of saving us," wrote an anonymous British officer, "for upon perceiving the error which Rohan had committed and no doubt aware of the consequences, he formed us into a hollow square, so that upon being surrounded shortly afterwards, we on all sides presented a front to the enemy. About nine o'clock they were obliged to quit the field; about ten we got possession of their camp and about three in the afternoon took the great and formidable town of Merta by storm."

Ismail Beg arrived with his troops on the eleventh to find the battle over. Even with Muslim reinforcements, the Raja of Jodhpur was in no mind to renew it, nor was his army in any state to do so. As is the way with allies, each questioned the courage of the other; then Ismail Beg moved hurriedly off into the desert, resolved to fight again another day.

At Merta the Rathors were not disgraced. From Colonel

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Tod we learn that a number of chiefs and four thousand men (Grant Duff says only four hundred), after solemnly drinking opium together for the last time and wrapping themselves in the ceremonial yellow shawls that dedicated them to victory or death, charged again and again until only sixteen were left alive, five of them chieftains. When de Boigne's square, over which flew the white cross of Savoy on a blue banner, remained unbroken, they dismounted and fought on foot until they were all killed.

De Boigne's British officer confirms this and says that "it is impossible for me to describe the feats of bravery performed by the Forlorn Hope of the enemy. I have seen, after the line was broken, fifteen or twenty men return to charge a thousand infantry and advance to within ten or fifteen paces before all were shot . . . The Rathors lost five chiefs, including a nephew of the Raja. These five, finding they could not escape, quitted their horses and fought with eleven other followers on foot until they were all cut to pieces."

It was no bloodless victory, for de Boigne's battalions had 689 killed and 1760 wounded, heavy casualties in any war out of a total strength of less than 8000. Captain Rohan was dangerously wounded and Lieutenant Roberts severely wounded by a weapon called an "Organ," which was composed of thirty-six musket barrels joined together to fire at once, and thus anticipated by a hundred and fifty years that amenity of our own times, the multiple mortar which the Germans called a *nebel-werfer*. There is, unfortunately, no nominal roll of the officers who were present at Patan and Merta and no casualty list, but it is on record that Perron distinguished himself at both battles.

Our anonymous young Englishman adds a human touch to his report of the storming of Merta. "The pillage lasted three days," he writes, "and to mention all the particulars attending it would make your teeth water. The ladies at first seemed displeased with our coming abruptly into the town but at length grew more kind acknowledging with good grace that none but the brave deserve the fair." He adds a final comment that: "This great victory is solely to be attributed to the coolness and intrepidity of our general in making so complete a disposition of his forces in time to repel the rapid charge of the most courageous cavalry in the world."

"The blood would mount to his temples and the old fire come into his eyes as he recalled, with inconceivable rapidity and eloquence, the story of that glorious day." So wrote Colonel Tod. For it was to the battle of Merta that de Boigne looked back in his old age as his finest hour. September 10th, 1790, if not the peak of his fortune, was the summit of his achievement as a soldier. Through no fault of his own it was, like Waterloo, "the nearest run thing you ever saw in your life." The day was saved by his generalship; like Wellington, he could rightly have claimed: "By God! I don't think it would have done if I had not been there."

No one, indeed, had any doubt to whom the credit for the victory was due. Said the *Calcutta Chronicle* a month after the battle:

"It was as great a battle and as signal a conquest as ever happened in this part of Hindustan. . . . De Boigne's battalions have certainly all the merit for this victory for the Mahrattas were never in front all the

time and did not attack the enemy till they were flying, when they joined in the pursuit. . . . De Boigne has shown such ability and courage and has so often led his troops to victory that the Corps seem to act as if they thought themselves invulnerable."

How good a general was de Boigne? His contemporaries, including the English in India, had no doubt that he was one of the "great captains" of the day. Because he never either commanded European troops or fought against them and because he was never matched with anyone who even remotely approached him as a scientific soldier, it is impossible to guess how he would have got on in the "big league." But "class" was apparent, as it was in Arthur Wellesley, who rose from no greater victories in India than those of de Boigne to become the Duke of Wellington. Of de Boigne one can only say that he had all the necessary qualities, including the rare and invaluable one of prescience, and that what he had to do he did with classic efficiency.

To evaluate him solely by his victories is not, however, enough. He was more than the central figure in an eighteenth century battle painting, storming, sword in hand, the enemy's guns at Patan or beating off cavalry charges at Merta. Away from the battlefield he showed himself an unusually humane and civilised man, judged even by the standards of a period much later than his own.

It was the appalling aftermath of the battle of Solferino in 1859 which shocked the Swiss, Henri Dunant, and led to the foundation of the International Red Cross. De Boigne, who had many Swiss characteristics, with gaiety added, was

earlier inspired by the same spirit. When he formed his brigade it has been mentioned that he provided medical service for his troops. This was not all. "It may not be superfluous to remark some humane measures adopted by General de Boigne," writes one of his officers, "to mollify the horrors of war. Every officer and soldier, when wounded, received a certain present in proportion to his wound, from fifteen days' to three or four months' pay, without any stoppage of pay during the time of his cure. The disabled of his army have a pension for life, to the amount of half their pay, and lands besides, and the relations of the killed and of those who die of their wounds get the property of the deceased. This is more than any European has ever done for the poor native, except the English Company."

At that, the English Company was ahead of the British Government, as the crippled beggars after the Napoleonic wars could testify. The system of "wound gratuities" and pensions strikes a modern note. So does a detailed statement, beautifully written on parchment, of the sale of the effects of an officer killed at Ajmer. It shows that General de Boigne bought a horse, a *batterie de cuisine*, and some silver and that the next two purchasers were Perron and Dugeon. After loans from brother officers had been deducted from the proceeds of the sale, there remained Rs.614 plus some odd annas and pice, say £77. The sum was paid to the captain's girl and is signed for "Asharikaman . . . her mark."

De Boigne's compassion extended also to the enemy. Believing, with Wellington, that nothing except a battle lost can be half so melancholy as a battle won, he restrained his own troops from the excesses which were the usual

sequel to victory in his day—and not only in India as the storming of Badajos was to exemplify.¹

A letter from another of his officers, published in the *Bengal Journal* a week after Merta, says: "As a soldier, it is not his smallest praise to say that by admirable perseverance he has smoothed the temper of the ferocious and almost intractable Mahrattas. He has disciplined an army hitherto deemed barbarous to the mild and regular European system and in the Corps immediately under him the predatory and rapacious license practised by the native armies is so curbed as to be deemed infamous by the meanest sepoy and never practised without certain and exemplary punishment. To his prisoners he is all that humanity and the finest spirit of civilisation could dictate. . . . Recently, when a large body of Rajputs had fallen into his hands after a desperate action and were about to be transfixed by the bayonets of some Mahratta auxiliaries, he saved them by a noble personal interference. . . ."

It was no wonder that even his enemies spoke well of him for that was a feat which the officers of civilised European armies were often unable to emulate. Nor has Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru himself succeeded in making the Mahrattas as tractable. The writer concludes: "*The dependence and firm reliance placed on him by Sindhia, the most consummate native politician in India, added to a profound respect and esteem, will speak strongly in his favour: the affection of his European*

¹ "The atrocities committed by our soldiers on the poor innocent and defenceless inhabitants of the city, no words suffice to depict. Civilized man, when let loose and the bonds of morality relaxed, is a far greater beast than the savage, more refined in his cruelty, more fiend-like in his every act; and oh, too truly did our heretofore noble soldiers disgrace themselves, though the officers exerted themselves to the utmost to repress it. . . ." *The Autobiography of Sir Harry Smith*, who saved a Spanish girl of fourteen at Badajos and won a wife who followed the colours for more than forty years.

officers, though of different nations, in private, as he has their confidence in public, will say much more."

* * *

In December the Raja of Jodhpur, despite the protests of Ismail Beg, finally came to terms with Sindhia. He was not reduced to a state of "complete imbecility," as Palmer had prophesied, but was heavily fined and promised to be punctual with his payment of tribute in future. So that neither he nor Jaipur could raise their heads again, the fortress of Ajmer and the surrounding country was handed over to Lakwa Dada as a *jaidad*. The power of the Rajputs was broken and de Boigne was able to return with his troops to Muttra in triumph.

He entered Sindhia's camp on January 1st, 1791, and was received with a salute from the whole of the artillery and a *feu de joie* of small-arms from the assembled Mahrattas. In the nine months since he marched out from Muttra he had made himself famous. But strong though he was, the summer campaigning had taxed his strength and Martin was begging him to retire. Martin had even selected his successor, one Colonel Frémont, a regular officer of the French army who had commanded the French troops at Chandernagore, but, being a Royalist, had resigned his commission when he heard what was happening in France and had come up country in search of employment.

De Boigne seems to have taken the idea seriously, for he wrote to Frémont and said that nothing could make him happier than to be able to hand over to an experienced officer and a man of integrity. The last campaign had been one of the most severe he had known since he became a

soldier. ("Never mind," he added, "*Finis honorificus laude coronat opus.*") Frémont would, however, need time to get to know what would be required of him and to familiarise himself with Indian politics—particularly the politics of this court. Also, everything would depend on Sindhia, who would not lightly consent to a change in the command. And Sindhia's prosperity, his fame and his happiness must be, he said, the overriding consideration. There was no other Indian Prince whom Frémont should even think of serving. Let him come up, have a look round and give Sindhia a chance to form his own judgment.

Frémont came and had not long to wait for a brigade. But if de Boigne had ever imagined that Sindhia would allow him to retire, he was quickly undeceived. So far from retiring, he was ordered to set about raising another brigade at once.

Within a year he had raised and trained it and had some 18,000 men under his command. Perron was given the new Second Brigade to lick into shape, with Dugeon from Savoy as his Brigade-Major, while Frémont took over the battle-ried First. Each brigade consisted of ten battalions and each battalion of eight companies, the strength of a battalion being just under 600. Each had its ancillary cavalry and artillery.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of de Boigne's War Establishments (which were duly reported to the Governor-General in Calcutta) is that they were as precise as they would be to-day, with band, orderly-room staff, runners, armourers, water-carriers and so on laid down on a scale from which battalion commanders were not allowed to deviate. In his uniform-case he preserved a number of old parade-states showing men with the battalion, men on

leave, men on detachment, men sick in quarters, etc. They are made out with great care by the orderly-room staff.

The "Return of the Pay of Officers and Men for the Month" is, however, in his own handwriting. That was something that he checked himself and the same officer who wrote of his humanity to prisoners records that "the troops, who were as well-clothed as the Company's troops, are invariably paid at the end of the month." Both they and the officers were poorly paid to start with (there were only two European officers per battalion), for though the brigade commanders received £150 per month the average rate for captains and subalterns was only £25.

There were, however, various pickings as all goods imported for an officer's personal use were exempted from customs duties and private trading was permitted if kept within bounds. Moreover, as the revenues from his *jaidads* or military landholdings increased, de Boigne raised the rates of pay until they were approximately doubled and compared more than favourably with those paid by the East India Company.

This powerful force, though it was in the service of a Mahratta prince, in fact contained only a small minority of Mahrattas. Nearly all the infantry came from Oudh, Rohilkhand and the Doab, the cavalry were mostly Pathans and the gunners Muslims from upper India or Hindus from Buxar. Men of different races and religions thus served together, with all the resulting problems familiar to officers of the Indian Army of our own day. Despising the Mahrattas with some justice, as an armed rabble who could not be relied on for support on the battlefield, they themselves could be attracted to the colours only by higher and, above

all, regular pay—which naturally made the Mahrattas jealous.

De Boigne was already up to his eyes in military administration, for in addition to recruiting and training the Second Brigade, he was establishing his own headquarters and camp at Coel, just outside Aligarh, his own arsenal in the fort at Agra and cannon foundries in which George Sangster turned out both guns and small-arms up to British standards. But to ensure the upkeep of his brigade and the pay of his troops he had to find the substantial sum of £14,000 a month—and find it himself. Whether he could do so depended upon whether he could show himself as good a civil as he was a military administrator.

Sindhia had already handed over to him thirty-two villages in the district of Ferozabad. The letter survives at Chambéry in which he is appointed Governor and called upon "*by your justice and equity to keep the peasantry satisfied and happy. You are to use your greatest efforts and activity in cultivating the land and increasing the Government's revenue. You are to fix a just and equitable tenure of rent, carefully realise every farthing from the peasants, out of which you are to pay the Army, all the camp, artillery, etc. The accounts of the receipts and disbursements of every crop are to be submitted for the royal archives. The peasantry are to consider the appointment permanent and are to deliver at the proper time the rent due to Government. Consider this as an express injunction. . . .*"

De Boigne was thirty-nine, an age at which many a British major, second-in-command of a battalion, has scratched his head over the P.R.I. accounts and complained that no soldier should be expected to compete with such complexities. Called upon, in the intervals of commanding the equivalent of a modern division, to assess and collect

the revenues of a huge area, in a foreign country, a foreign language and a foreign currency, he might well have been excused for asking for the eighteenth century counterpart of "a bowler-hat."

On paper there was cover enough, for the *jaidad* was estimated to be worth twelve lakhs of rupees or £160,000 a year. There was also an incentive, for de Boigne was to keep two per cent of his collections for himself. But he had seen, when in Lucknow, the difference between figures on paper and collections in fact. Even had he been willing to wring "every farthing from the peasants," there were territories all around him in northern India in which the starving peasantry neither would nor could pay anything at all. It is the greatest of his achievements, surpassing any performances upon the battlefield, that he not only raised the revenue and increased it by more than fifty per cent, but that his military fiefs became oases of peace and prosperity in the surrounding wilderness. Indeed the eminent Indian historian, Sir Jadunath Sarkar, maintains that it was on his foundation that the Indian Civil Service subsequently built their administration in the provinces of Agra and Oudh.

This great result was achieved by unremitting labour, by business ability and by the closest personal supervision. Constantly touring his territory, de Boigne put down lawless bands and gave the peasants what they had so long lacked, security in which to raise their crops. They were ready to raise them and to pay what was expected of them because they knew that they would not be asked for more than was due. For the same reason, de Boigne had no difficulty in collecting tribute from the Rajput princes.

Naturally he was pestered by pandits, those pandits who had the management of all business at Sindhia's court and

expected to embezzle half of everything that passed through their hands. But as one of Sindhia's ministers wrote to him when he complained: "My friend, the agency and encroachment of the pandits is not by command of His Royal Highness; these men take advantage of the least encouragement given to them. Never mind, we will take care that no stranger dare put his foot in your camp. Quietly intimate to the Maharaja the meddling of the pandits. . . ."

In the districts, the fingers of the pandits were kept out of the till by a simple device. De Boigne established two revenue offices, a "Persian" office and a "French" office, in which duplicate sets of accounts were maintained by men of different nationalities in different languages. Each office was thus a check on the other. Since no one has yet devised any system of restaurant accounting which will infallibly prevent collusion between the *maitre d'hôtel* and the chef, this might not, in itself, have been sufficient, though the accounts were checked daily by a European officer and it was known to all concerned that slackness and peculation would be severely punished. The overriding restraint upon dishonesty was de Boigne's own unerring memory and, in a man of action, his really remarkable aptitude for figures. His was an exact mind and he positively enjoyed reading or drawing up a balance-sheet, correct down to annas and pice, which are considerably less than shillings and pence. (An anna is the thirteenth part of a rupee or just over 2d at the then rate of exchange: the distinction between *pice*, one-fourth, and *pies*, one-twelfth, of an anna, was one which never fully registered with me all the time I was in India.)

It is thanks to this propensity that we are able to trace his financial progress. A "*Paper speaking to April 1st, 1792*," in his handwriting, shows that he was then worth Rs.510,652.

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2. 1. and would be worth Rs.635,652. 3. 1. by the end of the year. Let us ignore the annas and pice and even a few odd rupees and say that he was worth £63,830 on April 1st, and expected to be worth £80,000 in another nine months. For one who had been a penniless ensign ten years before it was a substantial fortune. Yet in view of the huge sums that were passing through his hands and the fact that the profits of his private trading with Martin were included, it was not excessive and proves that he had touched nothing to which he was not entitled.

XII

“A Prodigious Corps”

WITH ALL these preoccupations, it might be supposed that de Boigne had little time for family life. But H  l  ne was with him from time to time and at the end of 1791 or very early in 1792 she did her duty by presenting him, in Delhi, with a son. “Give my love to the Begum and kiss the young Baron for me,” wrote Palmer from Agra in February, signing himself “your affectionate and faithful friend.”

At the beginning of April, 1792, she returned with her two children to Lucknow, to be near her mother. “I had the pleasure of waiting on your good lady this morning,” reported Queiros next day, “and have seen your two little ones . . . She has surprised me by telling me that a house of less rent than Rs.20 (£2. 10. 0) a month might do for her while she is alone and is exceedingly afraid of making expenses. I have told her, however, what was your intention and that she should not be so economical. At present she has charge of two dear children of yours who, for the sake of saving a few rupees, ought not to be exposed to too close lodgings. In former times she knew how to live anywhere, as you did yourself. . . .” H  l  ne remained a treasure, docile and undemanding.

Claud Martin was away, in southern India, distinguish-

ing himself at the siege of Seringapatam, where he acted as A.D.C. to Lord Cornwallis, and took part in the night-attack on Tipu's camp. “Though at an advanced age” (he was fifty-seven but that was advanced enough to be on active service again after so many years in India), “and independent in fortune, he had come from the service of the Vizier to assist in this interesting war.” He had also contributed a very large cannon which he cast himself and which still stands on the terrace of La Martinière. For “the zeal and exertion which he manifested,” he was thanked by the Governor-General in Council and given the honorary rank of full Colonel.

With his keen eye for business he found time to go into the production of indigo in Mysore and, being an ardent botanist, to collect plants and grasses suitable for cattle food for the Company's Botanic Garden in Calcutta. *Andropogon Martini* was duly listed in Roxburgh's *Flora Indica* and it was Martin who introduced into Bengal the *Mysore Thorn*, popular in Calcutta to-day for ornamental hedges.

De Boigne's trading interests were not neglected and there was a shipment of fifty-one bales of goods from distant Lisbon to Lucknow for his private account. But both business and family had to be left in the hands of Queiros, for Sindhia, who had been toying with the idea for some months, had now finally decided to go south to Poona and present himself to his overlord, the Peshwa, in person.

Professedly he was acting under the orders of the Emperor, who, said Sindhia, wished him to hand over in due form all the titles and insignia with which Shah Alam had been graciously pleased to invest his loyal vassal, the President of the Mahratta confederacy. The real purpose of his journey lay deeper. Though he was the *de facto* ruler of the

Emperor's dominions and virtually an independent sovereign, Sindhia was still a Mahratta and had no intention of cutting himself off entirely from Poona. Thus he could not afford to allow the new young Peshwa to fall completely under the thumb of Nana Farnavis, the Machiavellian minister who was his mother's lover and reputedly his father.

Sindhia had great confidence in the magnetism of his own genial personality, which few could resist at close quarters. With reason he felt that, arriving fresh from his triumphs, he could win over a high-spirited young man, or at least neutralise the influence of Nana Farnavis. He himself was a famous soldier and what was the Minister, after all, but a fat Brahmin politician, if an astute and able one?

Moreover, Sindhia knew that Nana Farnavis was supporting Holkar, the other great member of the Mahratta confederacy. Their territories adjoined, they were nominally equal in status and Holkar was bitterly jealous of his success. Unmindful of his own duty to the Mahratta cause, he had stood aside and done nothing to help Sindhia in any of his battles. But when Patan and Merta had been won and the Rajputs crushed, he sent part of his own large army across the River Chambal into Rajputana and claimed to share in the spoils. If Sindhia was entitled to collect tribute from Jodhpur, then, he said, the tribute from Jaipur ought to be paid to him. He should also be allowed to occupy, jointly with Sindhia, the newly-annexed territory of Ajmer.

To arrive with his victorious troops would make every Mahratta suspect that Sindhia meant to usurp the power and perhaps the title of the Peshwa: to arrive without them would clearly be so dangerous, if the Peshwa proved hostile, that Nana Farnavis, himself a physically timid man, did not

at first believe that he would dare to come at all. But Sindhia never lacked courage and set off with only a small party under Colonel Hessing and a single battalion of infantry as a bodyguard. He knew that he was taking a grave risk in venturing so far from his own territory, for he by no means underestimated Nana Farnavis as an opponent. It was, however, a calculated risk. So long as de Boigne, with his now legendary army, was in the background, who would think of removing the great Sindhia by violence? Even to imprison him or to detain him at Poona under house arrest would be most unwise. De Boigne would certainly march to the rescue. Thus Sindhia, like the experienced lion-tamer stepping into the lions' cage, was not in such danger as the onlookers imagined—so long as he could rely completely upon de Boigne.

The flutter in Poona increased as he moved slowly southwards. Nana Farnavis wrote to the Governor-General to ask if he might retain permanently the services of a small English force. If so, the Peshwa would be glad to pay for them. The request was refused. The Mahrattas would have to resolve their own differences. Lord Cornwallis did not propose to embroil the Company in their disputes.

Holkar, for his part, understood that he would be mad to challenge, for the moment, de Boigne's new model army. It had set a fresh standard in Indian warfare and all he could think of was to imitate it. He therefore engaged the Chevalier Dudrenec, a Frenchman from Brest of good family, his father being a Commodore in the French navy, and offered him Rs.3000 (£375) a month to raise a brigade of four battalions of disciplined infantry. While they were being trained, he sought to embarrass Sindhia by summoning from the desert south-west of Jaipur that restless spirit,

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Ismail Beg, and encouraging him to make trouble in Sindhia's new dominions.

A pretext was soon found. One Najaf Quli Khan, a former military governor of Delhi, had recently died. His widow, a high-spirited woman, the sister of the monster, Ghulam Kadir, refused to surrender to Sindhia her fortress of Kanaund, lying to the south-west of Delhi, on the border of the Bikanir desert. Her husband had strengthened its defences for her before his death. It was difficult to approach because it was situated amongst sandhills and scrub and there was no water-supply outside its earthen walls. But Najaf Quli Khan, on his death-bed, had given his wife one last piece of advice. "Resist," he said, "but if de Boigne appears, surrender."

De Boigne could not allow anyone to defy Sindhia's authority in his absence and sent Perron and his brigade, with its artillery, to demand submission and to reduce the place if it were refused. The Begum would probably have yielded, had not Ismail Beg, financed by Holkar, arrived on the scene, full of fight as ever and with a force of 20,000 men. (He was supposed to be once more in allegiance to Sindhia but these niceties did not trouble him.)

Perron, in independent command for the first time, had no difficulty in disposing of the undisciplined enemy. Within two hours he had killed 2000 of them, routed the rest and driven Ismail Beg into the fortress with the survivors. He then sat down to invest the place, since he was not strong enough to take it by storm.

Artillery could make no impression on the thick earth walls and it seemed as though it might hold out indefinitely, for neither Ismail Beg nor the widow meant to surrender. Then the Begum was killed by a stray shell, while playing

chess with a eunuch—an end at least more sudden and merciful than that of her brother, Ghulam Kadir. Her own men at once lost heart and decided to save their lives by handing over Ismail Beg to the enemy. Getting wind of this, Ismail Beg himself surrendered to Perron on condition that his life be spared.

Perron, who had lost his right hand during the siege by the premature explosion of a hand grenade which he was in the act of throwing, pledged his own word and that of de Boigne that Ismail Beg should not be harmed. Kanaund capitulated on April 1st, 1792, and four days afterwards de Boigne himself arrived on the scene. So did orders from Sindhia—that Ismail Beg, if captured, was to be executed immediately. Perhaps not immediately, for he was, said Sindhia, to be treated with the same severity as Ghulam Kadir.

Amid all the bloodshed and violence of those turbulent times, the sequel is refreshing and creditable to all concerned. De Boigne replied that, his own honour and that of Perron being engaged, Ismail Beg's life must, of course, be spared. For his protection he had taken him into his own camp and would in due course send him to be confined in the fort of Agra. This he did and, having sold his horses, his elephants, his tents and so on, had the proceeds remitted to him. He also arranged for a subsistence allowance which would allow him to live in comfort.

Sindhia, at the best of times a quick-tempered man who did not easily forgive an injury, had had much to put up with from Ismail Beg, who had not only fought against him at Lalsot, at Chaksana, at Agra, at Patan and now at Kanaund, but had at least three times broken his word and gone over to his enemies. By all the standards of the

day, he would have been well within his rights in putting him, painfully, to death. However, he agreed that if de Boigne and Perron had given their word, that was the end of it. Ismail Beg could obviously not be left at large but he would be kept as a prisoner-of-war at Agra and well treated.

The news of this unusual clemency soon spread and surprised many almost incredulous onlookers. It so delighted them that their comments reveal Ismail Beg also as a sympathetic character. Writes Colonel Stuart to de Boigne:

"I rejoice at what you tell me of the probable safety of Ismail Beg. How fortunate he is to have fallen into such honourable protection! I really feel for him because he is a most gallant and intrepid man. But do not you apprehend, my dear friend, that when from under your immediate eye and protection lest treacheries be practised against his life? . . . Such a circumstance would be most cruel against you but we know how little delicacy Hindustanis show in cases where their own interests or revenge are in view . . . For God's sake exert yourself in his cause for the dignity of your own character is intimately connected with his safety."

A month before the fall of Kanaund and the surrender of Ismail Beg, Colonel Stuart had written to de Boigne, signing himself "Your faithful and most affectionate friend" and saying: "*Caught by our first acquaintance, I have ever remained in a state of fascination towards you and your interests; in short, my friend, it would not have been an easy matter to have broke the charms that from the beginning have bound me to you . . .*" After every allowance for the fact that the British seem to have been a more emotional and less inhibited race at the

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end of the eighteenth century than they have since become, the letter suggests that there was something about de Boigne which made him unusually *simpatico* to our ancestors.

Another British correspondent is worth quoting. Writing from Cawnpore, P. Cochrane says:

“What a prodigious corps you have got now! When you showed it to Ismail Beg under arms I dare say he would very gladly have given one half of Hindustan to be its commander. His projects of ambition would have been again revived and he might not unreasonably have attempted to drive Sindhia to Poona in good earnest, a matter about which he formerly cracked many a jest.

“By the bye, my dear fellow; your conduct to that turbulent and restless chieftain, in his captivity, has gained you much credit here, it has placed your reputation for generosity and humanity in the most amiable point of view.

“He was a man” [Cochrane wrongly thought that he was dead], “who for several years past had, by his military exploits in Hindustan, furnished the public with an almost constant topic of conversation, and who by his personal bravery and admirable dexterity in extricating himself from extreme distress and almost in an instant appearing as formidable as ever, had interested many in his favour . . .

“You talk of the hills of Savoy, but you will not see them in a hurry. You will first have Holkar to expel from Hindustan, then you will be employed to reduce the Sikhs, after which, if you leave a successor in whom Sindhia can confide, I think he may be prevailed on to give you your *rukset* but not before. . . .”

The story of Ismail Beg does not end happily; he was not the man to find captivity easily endurable. But if, as some say, he was later murdered in the fort at Agra, it was not Sindhia's doing, for Ismail Beg outlived him by five years. Nor was it any fault of de Boigne's; one of the last notes he made before leaving India was "to settle Ismail Beg's fate with Lakwa Dada, so as to have his life spared."

This was a creditable episode in de Boigne's career: there was another connected with the capture of Kanaund which was not so creditable, but comic. In addition to the lady who shared the stray shell with the eunuch, Najaf Quli Khan left a second wife named Moti Begum who was also in the fortress during the siege. After it fell, de Boigne saw that no harm came to her and in gratitude she decided to make him a present of an adopted daughter she had in Delhi. "Confound all presents wot eats," Mr. Jorrock's was later to remark. De Boigne ought surely to have been careful about accepting one, "sight unseen."

William Palmer was no prude but he did not approve. "All here desire their kindest regards to you;" he wrote before the end of April, when de Boigne can only just have left Kanaund. "Make my affectionate salaams to my sister the Begum. *How will she bear a rival Princess?*" The position was not so serious as that. "It was intended," wrote de Boigne in his final instructions to Queiros before sailing for Europe, "that when I got this girl she would live with me rather in an inferior condition, as being only an adopted girl of this Moti Begum. But she was far from being handsome and of a most violent disposition and temper, as well as bad education, so much that I could not gain upon her to live with her mother at Delhi, who also did not appear desirous to have her on account of her bad temper."

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Hélène had no reason to be jealous, for de Boigne does not appear ever to have lived with " Mihrunissa " anywhere. Being a man of his word, however, he pensioned her off and told Queiros that she was " free to marry or live single just as she pleases." For good measure, he pensioned off the unscrupulous Moti Begum also. The drain on his pocket was negligible: the confusion caused to such as have tried to sort out his domestic affairs was considerable. He has been generally credited with having married Moti Begum herself and she has been identified with the mother of his children.¹

* * *

Sindhia arrived in Poona on June 11th, 1792, and there began the duel between him and Nana Farnavis which was to continue for nearly two years. It was conducted with ceremonial politeness by both sides. Nana Farnavis used all his influence to prevent the eighteen-year-old Peshwa accepting the titles and insignia brought from the Emperor; it was inconsistent, he said, with the Mahratta constitution. Sindhia argued, successfully, that the Emperor was still the nominal fount of power and that his honours could not be refused without discourtesy.

An investiture was accordingly arranged and Sindhia saw to it that it was one of the utmost splendour, a Field of the Cloth of Gold. When, after accepting the Imperial gifts, the Peshwa returned to his capital in a gilt litter with Sindhia fanning him with a peacock-feather fan, " the pomp and grandeur displayed was beyond anything that

¹ " Mihrunissa " laid another false trail by ever afterwards describing herself as " General de Boigne's wife." She retired to Aligarh and lived at any rate until 1825 for in that year she sold two plots of land there.

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the people of Poona had ever seen." Amidst the shouts of the populace, volleys of musketry, salvos of cannon and the clang of thousands of musical instruments, Sindhia could be satisfied that he had staged the sort of *tamasha* that all Indians love. This was certainly his round.

The next round he lost because, being always something of a ham actor, he overplayed his part of the humble servant. When he himself in turn was invested by the Peshwa as his deputy in Hindustan (he had slipped in an imperial decree giving him the right to nominate his successor), the proud Mahratta chieftains were not impressed by his insistence on taking the lowest place, refusing any title higher than that of *Patel* or manager and personally changing the Peshwa's slippers. This mock-humility deceived neither Nana Farnavis nor anyone else, since all present knew that he had dictated the contents of the Emperor's *firmans* and that he intended to be deputy to both Peshwa and Emperor only in name. The round went to Nana Farnavis.

Sindhia was no fool and proceeded to repair his mistake by winning the affection of his young master. Up to a point, this was easy enough. A great sportsman, as well as a great captain, he was soon carrying off the Peshwa on hunting expeditions around Poona. The sedentary Nana Farnavis could not join in, though he tried to see that the two were never alone. With his easy, jovial manners, his stories of the chase, his description of his new army and its exploits, Sindhia was a fascinating companion for any young man. Nevertheless, though fascinated, the young Peshwa never allowed himself to be carried completely away. He valued Nana Farnavis as an adviser, even if there was no more to it than that, and had no intention of getting rid of him.

Thus the duel dragged on for more than a year, Sindhia

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demanding the recall of Holkar and a contribution to his enormous out-of-pocket expenses, Nana Farnavis insisting that he first account for the money he had collected in the conquered territories. Though they were so utterly dissimilar, except in their love of power, the two men did not really dislike each other: it was a conflict of interest and jealousy over the Peshwa that rasped their tempers.

XIII

Masters of Hindustan

MEANWHILE de Boigne was left responsible for the security of northern India. He was neither the most senior of Sindhia's generals nor his representative at the Emperor's court but it was upon him and his brigades that peace depended. It was an immense responsibility. Moreover, he knew that he had enemies, particularly amongst the avaricious "Pandits." (The generals might be jealous but they admired and liked him.) He knew that he was continually spied upon. He knew that, if there were no openly adverse reports, it would be discreetly hinted in Poona that he was certainly dishonest and probably disloyal. Such intrigues did not disturb him in the least. From the day Sindhia assured him, after Patan, that "anyone's writing against you will not be credited," he had no fear of losing his employer's friendship.

Sindhia, for his part, never wavered. Like any other Oriental ruler, he had to listen to tale-bearers. But they were not believed. Having once put his trust in de Boigne, he trusted him whole-heartedly and without reserve. Such confidence, between two men of different race, is rare enough to be remarkable. It says much for both.

Only de Boigne's health was in doubt. In June, 1792,

when Sindhia was staging his investiture in Poona, he was recovering from "a dreadful dysentery." "Do not, my friend," wrote Dr. Blane from Lucknow, "too long waste your health and your constitution. Try Europe, as I am going to do, and if we do not like it, which is extremely probable, we can come out again together. But do not graft yourself entirely on India and vegetate and wither a Mahratta."

De Boigne could not think of leaving while Sindhia was away. It was as well that he did not do so. For in September the quarrel with Holkar flamed into war. Encouraged by Nana Farnavis, Holkar had insisted in joining in the collection of tribute from the Rajput rulers. There was continual friction between the two sets of Mahrattas over the division of the spoils, the only common ground being that the Emperor was not going to see any part of them. A dispute over two ceded forts brought matters to a head. In great alarm, Gopal Rao, a favourite general who was acting as Sindhia's viceroy, reported to de Boigne that Holkar had crossed the river Chambal in force and was likely to rouse the Raja of Jaipur against Sindhia. Apart from his 30,000 cavalry he had four "new model" battalions under the Chevalier Dudrenec, officered by Europeans, and some modern artillery.

De Boigne moved at once with one brigade from his base at Coel, while Gopal Rao and Lakwa Dada collected 20,000 of their own cavalry. He came up with Holkar in broken, ravine-scored country, covered with thick scrub, at the pass of Lakheri, on the way from Kanaund to Ajmer. Having cut a path with his pioneers, protected by infantry, through the scrub jungle at the entrance to the pass, he climbed a tree with Perron to make a personal "recce" and saw

Dudrenec's battalions well-posted in a defile between the hills, the cavalry hovering about in open ground on their flanks. There was only a narrow front on which to deploy but de Boigne did not hesitate to attack the strongest point. He had no opinion of Mahratta horse, his own or the enemy's, and knew that Dudrenec was the man he must beat.

The infantry were moving forward in good order when suddenly an ammunition tumbrel was hit by a shell and blew up in the middle of them. The explosion set off twelve more. For a time the brigade was in confusion and Holkar's cavalry tried to break in amongst them. They were beaten off by musketry and, as they wavered, de Boigne charged them over the broken ground at the head of his superbly-mounted bodyguard. It was only three hundred strong but the impetus was enough. The enemy cavalry turned and fled, riding through Dudrenec's battalions as they went. At once de Boigne dismounted, picked up his shaken infantry and led them up the defile to the attack.

Dudrenec, though he was an unlucky soldier, must have been a good trainer of troops. His men stood fast and fought gallantly until half of them, with nearly all their European officers, had been killed. Thirty-eight guns were captured and Dudrenec himself, pulled out from under a pile of dead, escaped on his horse. (Years later he was to join Perron—and desert him.) But for the explosion of the ammunition, de Boigne's last battle would doubtless have been won more easily than Merta. As things went, it might easily have been lost had he not been a "front-line soldier." Holkar was not, and his son, who was, is said to have passed the action drunk in a ditch.

Perhaps no single victory gave Sindhia so much personal

satisfaction as Lakheri. Not only had his last rival been removed; he had shown Nana Farnavis the danger of intriguing against him. And it was all due to de Boigne.

"I am in receipt of the news-letter," he wrote from Poona, "announcing the most glorious victory achieved by you, the running away of the Holkars (father and son), the fierce battle that took place . . . you fought like Rustam, champion of imperishable memory. Your attack was that of a hero; also the officers and soldiers performed their duty with intrepidity . . . you are the only one capable of such an action; the bravest alone could accomplish this . . . In truth, you are the help of my right arm.

"By the grace of God, the long-cherished desire of my heart to punish the Holkars has been accomplished. I have written to Gopal Rao not to allow the fugitives a moment's rest anywhere, but to pursue them hotly across the river Chambal. They will carry this order into effect but support them, my brave and valiant friend. . . ."

Holkar had had enough and paused only to burn Sindhia's open city of Ujjain as he fled into his own country. But the Raja of Jaipur, backing the wrong horse, had renounced allegiance to Sindhia and refused to pay tribute. De Boigne marched directly upon his capital from Lakheri. The news of the battle preceded him. When he appeared, the Raja submitted and paid not only his tribute but a fine of nearly a million pounds. Then he invited de Boigne to stay with him and entertained him royally.

It was only ten years since he had engaged him on Rs.2000 a month and later cancelled his contract. It had proved an unfortunate change of mind. Had de Boigne

served the Rajputs instead of the Mahrattas, the history of northern India might have been very different. Nevertheless, the Raja bore no malice. To celebrate the battle of Lakheri, which had cost him a million pounds and his last chance of independence, he conferred a *jagir* of £1250 a year on de Boigne's small son. De Boigne wrote to Sindhia before accepting. Sindhia was touched and replied that the fact that he did not look to any other government for reward proved that he was a sincere and devoted officer. "We admire you; you have our permission to accept the *jagir*. Since it is voluntarily offered, why should you hesitate to accept?" The secretary adds a little note, sending his personal compliments.

Sindhia's own finances, wrote Palmer to the Governor-General, had been "much deranged during his absence owing to the rapacity or neglect of his officers" and his revenues had so declined as to be inadequate for the maintenance of his army. De Boigne, whose own territory, collections and accounts were in perfect order, reported what was happening to Poona. Sindhia proceeded to sack governors of provinces and their attendant pandits. But he did not attempt to economise where de Boigne was concerned. On the contrary, he ordered him to raise yet a third brigade and, to finance it, assigned to him another district in the south-west of the Doab, adjoining the dominions of the Nawab of Oudh.

This new military fief or *jaidad* was estimated to be worth twenty-seven lakhs of rupees a year—about £330,000. The revenues of the original fief were to be merged in it but as the cost of the whole force was now calculated at £220,000, de Boigne was well covered. The value of his own personal *jagir* on both sides of the river Jumna, Sindhia's gift, was

about £5,000 a year. He also had his pay of Rs.10,000 a month—another £15,000 a year. With the percentage on his collections and the profits of his trading and indigo ventures with Martin, he must have been making well over £50,000 a year, legitimately and with Sindhia's knowledge and approval.

De Boigne did not think only of himself. He found time to write to the Queen Mother in Delhi to say that "my heart burns to hear the straitened circumstances of His Majesty (the Emperor) . . . I should not have credited it had I not seen it with my own eyes . . . The Maharaja himself (Sindhia) is in total ignorance of all this. He has fixed Rs.50,000 per month for His Majesty and thinks that it is being paid every month. When I shall mention the full particulars to him, then his eyes will be opened . . . He is very shrewd and intelligent: as soon as he is made acquainted with your affairs he will fix everything to your satisfaction."

With the grant of his new *jaidad* and the creation of the new brigade de Boigne raised the pay of his officers all round. A full colonel was now to receive £375 a month, a lieutenant-colonel £250 a month and a major £150—rates which would have "made your teeth water" in the Indian Army of our own time and would do so still more to-day. Indian officers, who formed the great majority, were also well-treated and, from the beginning, received regular commissions in writing, as did the Europeans. Great judges of character, they would have followed de Boigne because of his courage and his military skill; they loved him because he looked after them and they knew that, however rich he might become, he was not enriching himself at their expense.

Sindhia and de Boigne had reached their zenith. In northern India, there was none to challenge their power. At Poona, Nana Farnavis, having tried in vain to turn the Peshwa against Sindhia, could only burst into tears and tender his resignation. When it was refused and he collected cavalry, with some desperate idea of using force, de Boigne sent down Perron and his whole brigade to keep the peace.

That master and man could rely completely upon each other was obvious to every onlooker. "*Nothing can display in a stronger light the superiority of Sindhia's mind,*" wrote Sir John Shore in an official minute, "*than the confidence which he reposed in Mr. de Boigne, who repaid it by his exertions and attachment, and it is fortunate perhaps, for the Company, that Sindhia's selection of an European General, to whom he entrusted a force equal or superior to all that he retained, and to whom he assigned an extensive tract of improvable country, was made with so much judgment.*"

Major William Tone, brother of the famous Wolfe Tone of the United Irishmen, spoke of de Boigne as "a man of first-rate talents as an officer and consummate knowledge as a politician; indefatigable in his pursuits, whether of war or negotiation, whose splendid abilities, displayed upon a noble theatre, created for himself a princely fortune by a series of successful and honourable labours."

With Sindhia still in Poona, de Boigne was almost overwhelmed with work. Major Lewis Ferdinand Smith (Longinus), who joined him about this time, wrote of him: "Active and persevering to a degree which can only be conceived or believed by those who were spectators of his indefatigable labours . . . I have seen him daily and monthly rise with the sun, survey his arsenal, view his troops,

enlist recruits, direct the vast movements of three brigades, raise resources and encourage manufactures for their arms, ammunition and stores; harangue in his *darbar*, give audience to ambassadors, administer justice (his justice was uncommon and singularly well-proportioned between severity and relaxation), regulate the civil and revenue affairs of a *jaidad* of twenty lakhs of rupees, keep his accounts, his private and public correspondence, and direct and move forward a most complex political system . . . Such was his laborious occupation from sunrise to past midnight." Smith adds that he did all this without any European assistance for "he is very diffident in placing his confidence and extremely cautious in bestowing his trust."

He gives two main reasons for de Boigne's having succeeded "where many adventurers in the same line have repeatedly failed." The first was that he was "religiously faithful to his master and amidst the most enticing offers to betray, preserved his allegiance unsullied." The second was one that has already been noticed. "For the want of a fixed and sufficient fund to pay their troops, other Europeans, who relied on the promises of their oriental employers, were ruined. The soldiery increased in arrears; desertion, tumult, treachery and revolt ensued and the commanders either lost their lives or their commands. De Boigne's penetrating genius foresaw and obviated this fatal error . . . *Point d'argent, point de suisse* is a true axiom everywhere, but more especially in India: the purse commands the sword . . ." As long as the first call on the revenue from the *jaidad* was the pay of the troops, "this army will be well-paid, well-regulated, powerful and victorious." As for the peasants who provided the revenue, since the land was in as high a state of cultivation as the most fertile parts of Benares,

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"the *ryots* (peasants) are as happy as sensual beings can be, abstracted from intellectual enjoyments."

De Boigne could thus look forward with pleasure and an easy mind to the return of his master. It was agreed on all sides that it could not be much longer delayed. But in February, 1794, came the startling and disastrous news that Sindhia was dead.

XIV

Portrait of a General

SINDHIA DIED on February 12th, 1794, in a suburb of Poona. It was officially announced that he had died of fever. Because of his notorious hostility to "the overgrown ascendancy of the Brahmins" and because his death seemed to occur so opportunely for the Brahmin, Nana Farnavis, it has been surmised that he was murdered by an armed gang in the employ of the minister.

Murder by hired thugs was a common method of removing a political rival. But news of such an affray would have spread through the city like fire and must have come to the ears of Charles Malet, the British Resident. Malet had, however, written to the Directors a week before to say that Sindhia "has been troubled for some days with a feverish complaint, which has recurred frequently within the last six months and will probably hasten his departure from here." In announcing his death to Sir John Shore, who had succeeded Lord Cornwallis as Governor-General only a few months previously, Malet attributes it to the effects of this "indisposition." "*I believe few masters or princes have better deserved the affection and attachment of their subjects and servants than this extraordinary man,*" he added. But power in

the East is a very personal thing and all India was concerned to see whether his empire would survive his passing.

At first all went well. Sindhia had left no son but he had appointed his fifteen-year-old nephew, Daulat Rao, to succeed him. Some of the Mahratta chieftains in northern India toyed with the idea of declaring their independence but de Boigne quickly put his foot on that. Daulat Rao was unanimously accepted. Letters were sent in his name to the Emperor, announcing Sindhia's death and his own succession and requesting that he be honoured with the same marks of the imperial favour that had been accorded to Sindhia. Letters were also sent to the Governor-General and to the rulers of Jaipur and Jodhpur and other native powers.

De Boigne was at once confirmed in his appointment on the same terms and in a personal letter one of Daulat Rao's ministers wrote: "After the demise of our illustrious master, we are all doing our utmost to ensure the advancement and success of the Government. . . . We are all your steadfast friends; do not look upon us as strangers."

Meanwhile the English held a watching brief. They might reasonably conclude, said Malet, that the great instruments employed by Sindhia in the command of distant armies and in the government of foreign provinces would lose something of their energy and vigour from falling into inexperienced hands. New life would presumably be given to his former enemies, such as Holkar and the Rajputs, and the blind Emperor himself might dream of emancipating himself either by arms or intrigue. He might even try to win over de Boigne. . . .

The centre of power would probably shift to Poona, where the Peshwa and his ministers would clearly have much

more influence over the young Daulat Rao than they had had over Sindhia. The Peshwa might expect to become, what he was in name, the direct representative of the Emperor in Hindustan. Sir John Shore, who had always regarded the diminution of the Mahratta power and of that of Sindhia as "a most desirable event," knew no justifiable method by which it could be attempted. The Emperor could escape from his thralldom only if assured of British protection: the subject states could recover their independence only if they knew that the British were disposed to promote it. But "unprovoked hostilities are equally prohibited by the Legislature and sound policy and the restriction must be understood to apply to the adoption of any measures necessarily or naturally leading to war."

The English, in fact, had little to fear so long as Nana Farnavis and de Boigne remained in power. It cannot be supposed that the former was prostrated by grief at Sindhia's death even if he had had no hand in it. Yet on one point their views had been identical. Neither had any intention of starting—or being manœuvred—along that fatal path which was soon to lead to conflict with the English and give a stronger man than Sir John Shore the excuse to reduce the Mahratta Confederacy to subjection.

De Boigne was entirely of their mind. In no circumstances would he fight against the Company. Had he remained in India he might have saved Daulat Rao from the consequences of his own folly and evil influence of others, for the weak, self-indulgent, silly boy looked up to him. But de Boigne had wrecked his magnificent constitution and was bent on retirement. He had already applied to Sindhia for leave to Europe after his victory over Holkar at Lakheri.

As soon as Daulat Rao succeeded, he renewed his

application. He was implored to stay two more years and agreed to do so only on condition that he should not be asked to take the field in the south, where war between the Mahrattas and the Nizam of Hyderabad was impending over an old question of tribute. In the service of his new master he carried on as conscientiously as ever, his position unchallenged, his energy apparently undiminished by ill-health.

Much the best, because the simplest, picture of de Boigne at the height of his fame is that painted by young Thomas Twining, aged eighteen, the newly-joined civil servant.¹ Twining's sketch of de Boigne's career contains only a very few minor inaccuracies. It may be omitted because there is nothing in it that we do not know: it is the portrait of the General *en pantoufles* which is enlightening.

Having been presented to the Emperor in Delhi, Twining had made a long detour through dangerous country to visit de Boigne "whose name had acquired a brilliant celebrity through all India of late years, although I had never met anyone who had seen the distinguished individual of whom everyone had heard." He sent a messenger to announce his arrival and reached Coel on the afternoon of December 10th, 1794.

"A crowd of servants in handsome white dresses received me with much respect and conducted me through the gate into the garden, in the centre of which I saw the General's house. Before I had advanced many steps I perceived the General himself coming to meet me.

"His reception was most polite and cordial. He was

¹ His impressions were written down in his diary while he was the General's guest at Coel in December, 1794. Probably they were included in his next letter home. They were not meant for publication and were not in fact published until 1894.

pleased to express himself flattered at my coming so far out of the usual and safest road for the purpose of seeing him. He took me into a large room on a level with the garden walk, and after we had sat together by the side of the dining-table which was in the middle of it, he ordered his servants to bring in fruit and refreshments. In the meantime he showed me my bedroom—a small apartment simply but neatly furnished, at the end of the great hall. Here, as in the dining-room, white, undecorated walls, a mat upon the floor, and a few plain chairs, with the addition of a small cot, bespoke less the limited resources of the country than the simplicity of the General's character and the habits of a military life. He left me in this room with numerous attendants, some of whom poured cool water upon my hands and washed my feet, while others unpacked my baskets and gave me clean linen.

“After this luxurious indulgence, one of the greatest the East affords, I hastened back to the General, with whom I was already much pleased. His tall, upright figure and martial deportment reminded me of Sir Robert Abercromby; while a polite, gracious relaxation of a certain air of military austerity was not perhaps less prepossessing than ease more habitual.

“Dinner was served up at four. It was much in the Indian style: pillaus and curries, variously prepared, in abundance; fish, poultry, and kid. The dishes were spread over the large table fixed in the middle of the great hall and were, in fact, a banquet for a dozen persons, although there was no one to partake of it but the General and myself. The conversation turned upon the great political and military events then going on beyond the Ganges. Finding that I had accompanied Sir Robert Abercromby

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from Bengal, he made many inquiries about the British Commander-in-Chief, the meeting between him and the Nabob of Oude at Dalmow, the battle in Rohilcund, etc.

“When dinner was over, the General asked me if I would like to take a ride with him on his elephant. I gladly accepted and in half-an-hour a very fine animal was ready at the garden gate. It went down upon its knees, or rather upon the inside of its fore and hind legs, all being extended outwards, and a ladder with broad steps being placed against its side, General de Boigne invited me to ascend, and, he mounting also, we took to our seats by the side of each other in the *howdah*. Preceded and followed by numerous attendants, we first made a short circuit over the plain, and then proceeded towards the stables of the General’s celebrated bodyguard, or rather to the spot where the horses were picketed, for they were not in stables, but in the open air.

“The General said that his horses, being thus exposed to the weather, were hardy and little affected by its variations on taking the field. Certainly they were in excellent condition and seemed to merit their high reputation. My satisfaction was really great and the General seemed pleased with it. He saw that my praise was sincere and was not aware that it was possible to live so long at headquarters without acquiring any knowledge of military affairs. . . . The appearance of the horsemen, who stood in their handsome, picturesque dresses by the side of their horses and saluted the General as we passed, was no less striking. They were all fine men, with the reddish complexion and martial physiognomy of the northern provinces. I told the General that I should be asked many questions respecting this

regiment, on passing through the stations of the Company's army, and that I lamented my inability to do it justice.

"The inspection being over, we made another digression across the plain, and as soon as it was dark returned to the house, took coffee at the table in the great hall, and remained in conversation till a late hour. I proposed continuing my journey the next day, but the General insisted upon my staying longer with him. He said I was now his prisoner and he could not consent to release me so soon.

"*December 11th*—Breakfast with the General in the great hall, he taking his seat at the head of the long table, I my usual one by his side. When the things were removed and he had called for his first *chillum*,¹ he said he must introduce his son to me, and giving some orders to his servants they returned in a short time, with a child about three or four years old, and placed him in a high chair by the side of his father . . . The little boy was dressed much as the child of a prince of the country would have been—a sort of turbaned cap, similar to what his father wore, and sandals, worked with gold thread on his feet. There was a slight tint in his complexion; and a delicacy in his features and form that led me to doubt whether he would ever attain his father's tall and vigorous stature.

"Soon after, a great many natives of rank, who had left their horses or palanquins at the gate, arrived successively. They were very handsomely dressed and wore valuable shawls of different colours and turbans, varying also in colour and shape, according to the rank, country, caste, or taste of the wearer. After salaaming, first to the General,

¹ Aromatic tobacco paste for his hookah. "What a mean, vulgar thing does the bacco-pipe seem, when compared with this, even in the mouth of its great patron, Dr. Parr," commented Twining.

then to his son, and then to me, they took their seats upon a carpet spread for them upon the mat round the edge of the room. Such as came for the first time presented a *nuzzur*, or offering of gold or silver, according to his station, to the General, who took it off the cloth on which it was laid and placed it on the table. A smaller offering was then held in the same way to the *Sahibzada*, or heir, or first-born, as he was called, seated on the General's left, and after he had touched it with his right hand, in sign of acceptance, it was placed before him also on the table. At the end of the ceremony there was a small heap of gold mohurs and rupees before the child, who went through this early initiation in eastern manners very readily, receiving and answering the salutations of the persons introduced and touching their gifts without any kind of embarrassment.

"When all these respectable men were seated, they nearly lined three sides of the hall. The view which I had of these nobles of Hindostan from where I sat was extremely interesting. It would be difficult to find an assembly more rich in materials for the pencil.

"The persons composing this fine gallery were chiefly ambassadors from the surrounding states, sent to propitiate the favour of the victorious General. The homage of so many princes attested the influence which General de Boigne possessed in this part of India and was the result, doubtless, of the success which had attended his arms. . . .

"The histories of the General's battles, extorted from him by my pressing curiosity, were given with an unaffected reserve that completed the charm of these valuable relations. I had indeed heard much of the extraordinary victories of the European general before I left Bengal, for their fame had filled all India; but I did not know distinctly who this

great commander was, or where he resided; still less did I imagine that I should one day be sitting by his side at his headquarters, hearing the modest recital of his wars from his own lips, and see him in the meridian of his glory, surrounded by the representatives of the states which he had conquered and restored.

"To return to the levee, when all his distinguished visitors were seated, he addressed a few words first to one and then to another. Important subjects were obviously avoided in this courteous intercourse; but I was never more sensible of the characteristic charm of eastern manners than on this occasion. No European court could well display more propriety, more delicate tact and grace, than did these noble delegates of Hindostan. Nor did the General less excel in his part. His dignity was remarkable. It seemed as if he were formed to command alike in the council and in the field.

"After dinner to-day the General again ordered his elephant and, accompanied by a more brilliant escort than before, took me to see the town of Coel. The General told me that Coel being attacked a few years before by a body of Sikhs, he retired with his adherents to the interior of the mosque and finally succeeded in repelling the assailants after much bloodshed on both sides. Leaving Coel, we prolonged our ride till it was nearly dark, and then returned to the General's residence.

"This evening the General's conversation was particularly interesting, and in some degree confidential. He said he much wished to remain on good terms with the East India Company, but that he was quite prepared to meet their forces in the field, should such a necessity arise. He alluded to the late campaign under Sir Robert Abercromby in

Rohilcund, and, pointing out the errors of the defence made by the Rohillas, did not scruple to disclose the system of tactics he should adopt under similar circumstances. I was amused with the frankness and good-humour with which he expressed himself upon this subject; and upon my asking him if I might communicate what he said to Sir Robert Abercromby, he laughed and said, 'Oh, yes, you are perfectly welcome to do so'; he added that he had a great respect for Sir Robert and trusted that they should never meet but as friends. But that part of his conversation was the most interesting which related to his own history. . . ."

(After telling of his early career and insisting that he was not a Frenchman) "the General described the difficulties he had to encounter, the prejudices to overcome, the innate distrust of a native prince to remove, the dangerous jealousy of rivals to counteract. The result was that the young de Boigne—for he was then about thirty-five years of age—aided by the resources of a mind singularly formed for such a situation, active, enterprising, penetrating, judicious, gradually made his way through all the difficulties that surrounded him; converted the first alarm of the Hindu prince into confidence, his oppression into acts of favour and kindness, his hostility into unbounded friendship, till at length, he rose to be the defender of his country and victorious leader of his armies. . . ."

(After describing his army and his administration) "he said that the proper discipline of his brigades, according to the European system, necessarily required the employment of a few European officers under him. These, I understood, were mostly Frenchmen and the General told me that his chief difficulty now was in managing them; in giving them authority enough to be useful, but not enough to be

dangerous; in conciliating their attachment while keeping them at a proper distance; in establishing due limits to their intrigues; and in disconcerting, without exposing, their ambition.

"*December 12th*—I had intended to continue my journey this morning at daybreak but the General invited me pressingly to spend another forenoon with him. After breakfast the *Sahibzada* was again introduced and received the same homage and the same offerings as before. The General proposed my sending back the guard and all the people I had brought from Delhi, saying he would furnish me with an escort and everything else that was necessary for my return to the Ganges . . . And now, at a little after twelve, terminated a visit which every circumstance attending it had rendered most satisfactory and agreeable. I took leave of the General at the garden gate, when he put a fine escort of eleven horsemen and fifteen sepoy under my orders to the Company's nearest station. My escort had never been so respectable. I rode all the afternoon with the captain of General de Boigne's party—a fine, intelligent man, who spoke with pride of his General's campaigns."

Colonel Claud Martin was equally kind to young Twining when he reached Lucknow and took him out to see "another mansion which he was then completing"—Constantia, or La Martinière. Twining also made the acquaintance of the English residents and remarked that "the style in which this remote colony lived was surprising, it far exceeding the expense and luxuriousness of Calcutta." They dined with each other on alternate nights and had established "a numerous band of musicians who played during dinner." Asaf-ud-daulah was unfortunately on tour, with a hundred ladies of his harem, his horses, his elephants and many

thousand pigeons, but Twining was shown his palaces, his strange collection of *objets d'art*, his zoo, and the unfortunate English dray-horse, now kept as a curiosity because of his enormous bulk. He was shocked by what he saw, the more so when he learnt that the extravagance and dissipation of the Nawab-Vizier were encouraged by "the dishonourable cupidity and deception of the British subjects at the expense of the poor inhabitants of Oudh."¹

* * *

A man is revealed in his actions, in the recorded opinion of his contemporaries and in his correspondence. Except for a few small punitive expeditions, de Boigne spent the two years after Sindhia's death in keeping his army of nearly 30,000 men up to the mark and in administering his *jaidad* and *jagir*. There were no more great battles to be fought and although he might very easily have increased his power at the expense of his master and, indeed, made Hindustan his own, he does not seem to have had any such ambition. Nor was he tempted by an offer from the King of Kabul to name his own terms, up to the half of his kingdom, if he would change his allegiance and make the Afghans rulers of northern India.

Only once did he interfere in what did not directly concern him and then, it would appear, it was at the request of the Governor-General. Shortly before he retired, the officers of the Bengal Army were in a state of almost open

¹ Thomas Twining did well in India and was in charge of a large district when his health forced him to retire at the age of twenty-nine. He lived to eighty-five, however, and visited de Boigne at Chambéry. In 1795, the year after his visit to Coel, he spent his leave in the United States, took tea with General George Washington and his wife and wrote an equally good account of his experiences in his diary.

mutiny because they objected to a proposal for amalgamating all the Company's troops throughout India and putting the officers on a general list. It was one of those plans which are made for administrative convenience, without regard to the feelings of individuals. Sir John Shore, a timid, "chair-borne" official, took fright and asked for troops to be held in readiness in Madras and the Cape of Good Hope. Because the officers were holding meetings and "urging their pretensions with great pertinacity and much intemperance," he also called on the Navy to stand by and appealed to de Boigne.

De Boigne agreed to send a force of cavalry under European officers to restore order if necessary. The amalgamation was dropped, the trouble blew over and the affair is of interest only because it shows in what regard de Boigne was held by the Governor-General and the Court of Directors. There was certainly no other foreign irregular whom the East India Company would have invited to help in quelling a mutiny amongst its own troops.

Contemporary opinion has been quoted and not a great deal of de Boigne's correspondence for this period survives. But he was a voluminous letter-writer, as were so many in the eighteenth-century, and there is an interesting interchange of letters between him and Colonel Sir John Murray, a person of some importance in Calcutta. Colonel Murray was concerned about the fate of the Taj Mahal. Writing "out of the blue" to de Boigne because, although they were not acquainted, "the Character you bear is not unknown to me," he said that he had repeatedly heard that the "Monument of Eastern Magnificence and Refinement is likely soon to fall into irrevocable decay unless measures be taken without loss of time to prevent it." Could not de

Boigne do something and thus confer an obligation on Mankind?

This was just before Sindhia's death and de Boigne promptly replied that, though he did not pretend to be a connoisseur of the beauties of the Mausoleum, he had already spoken two or three times to Sindhia on the subject. The trouble was that the Mahrattas, including Sindhia himself, abhorred everything Mohammedan. Also there were the embezzling pandits, ready to intercept any grant. However, he would speak to Sindhia again and do his best.

Murray thanked him for the handsome manner in which he had responded and added surprisingly modern suggestions for notices, guides, the control of visitors, etc. A grant was made and although it was not until Lord Curzon came, a century later, that adequate provision was made for the protection of India's ancient monuments, both Colonel Murray and de Boigne may be included among the benefactors of the Taj. De Boigne's instinct was always to be obliging and when Colonel Murray ventured on more dangerous ground and implored him to come to the rescue of the unfortunate Shah Alam and his dependents, he replied at length.

"I have been for near these two years past endeavouring to alleviate the miseries of that family," he wrote, "and have been perhaps rather troublesome to the late Maharaja Sindhia in that respect. I will not disguise from you that the principal motives of my exertions were not so pure as yours, they being rather intended to the reputation of the Prince, my master, and perhaps my own, knowing that the King's miseries could not but tarnish it in the eyes of the world. . . ." Again the fault lay with the Mahratta

character, "particularly the Pandits! You can have no idea of their avarice, parsimony, insensibility and bad faith . . . Being forced, against my wish, to enter into all the details of Government, I have had opportunity to know them better than I have been able to learn in ten years before." However, again he would do his utmost.

At the beginning of this last letter, which was written from Coel on March 12th, 1795, de Boigne apologises for being so long in replying and says that the cause is not neglect or forgetfulness "but I have had so bad a state of health these six months past that with the greatest difficulty have I been able to attend in part to the duties of my station, which are, indeed, too great to leave me a moment's quietness of mind or body."

By the end of October, William Palmer reports to the Governor-General that de Boigne is determined to retire. On Christmas Day, 1795, he took the salute as the troops marched past him for the last time on the plain of Agra. It was only seven and a half years ago that he and his two battalions, after standing firm throughout the burning heat of that long June day, had advanced at sunset to scatter the Mogul forces, drive Ismail Beg across the Jumna and set Sindhia on the road to Delhi.

With the Taj sparkling in the crisp winter sunshine and his flag flying from the battlements of the fort, he sat on his horse and took leave for ever of the army he had created. When one has known and come to love the Indian soldier, with his superb physique, his martial bearing, his impeccable "turn-out", his courage and his unswerving loyalty; when, after seeing him in action in the Western Desert and on many foreign battlefields, one has watched him swing past in the final victory parades in London and

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New Delhi, one may perhaps surmise that de Boigne had a lump in his throat as the last unit reached the saluting-point and turned its eyes towards him.

Then the parade was dismissed. After distributing four lakhs of rupees (£50,000), among his troops—hardly the final gesture of a mean man—de Boigne, “attended by his personal bodyguard, with four elephants, 150 camels and bullock-wagons laden with his effects,” set off for Lucknow and Europe.

XV

Farewell to India

A FEW years later it was suggested that de Boigne had seen the approach of the storm which was to overwhelm the Mahrattas and had prudently got out of India before it broke over his head. In fact, there is no doubt that the reason he gave for his retirement—ill-health—was the real one.

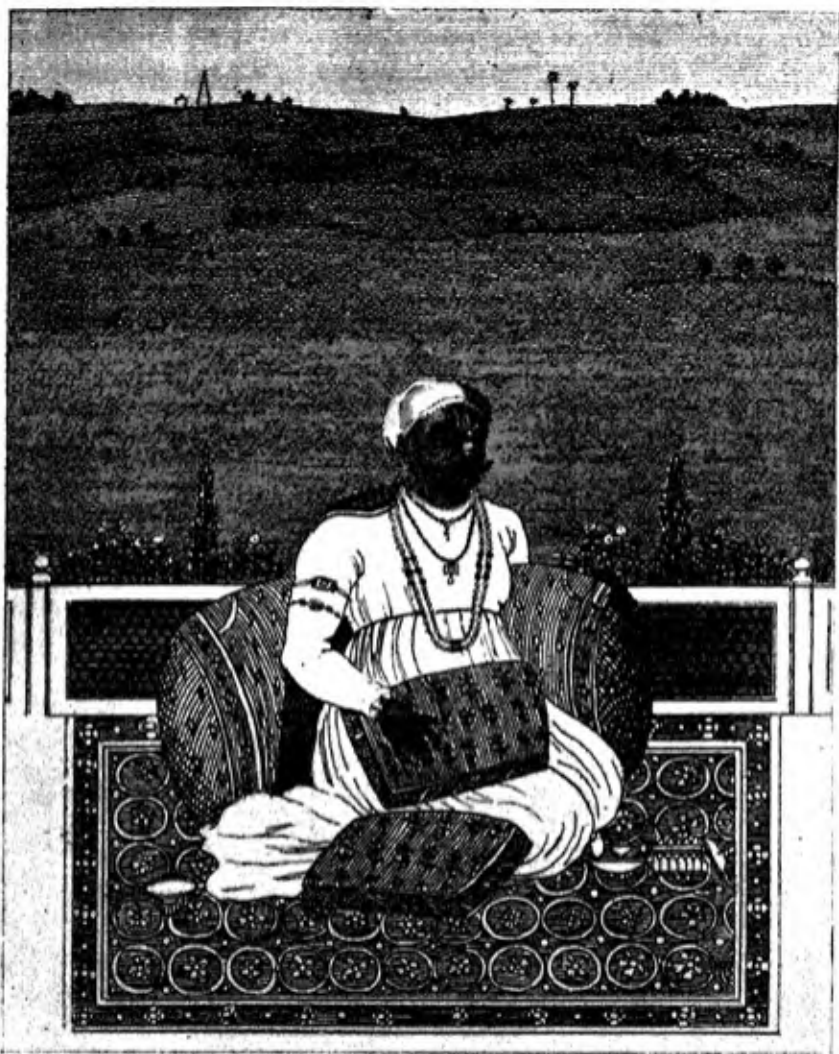
Ten days after his last parade, on January 4th, 1796, he writes from Fategarh, where he had called in to pick up his friend William Palmer: "As the Devil will have it, on New Year's Day I have had the most cursed fit of that fever for twenty-four hours, five of which I passed in the most profound delirium." Five months later he writes from Calcutta to his London agents: "I don't know if I shall be able to wait until November to embark for Europe, my health is so bad. . . ." Though malaria and its causes were not discovered until many years later, it was almost certainly from chronic malaria, and probably from the variety so strangely called "benign," that he was suffering.

In spite of it, he set himself in his methodical fashion to put all his affairs, political, military, financial and domestic, in order before he was due to sail towards the end of 1796. On major policy, his parting advice to Daulat Rao Sindhia was short and to the point. It was "never to excite the

jealousy of the British Government by increasing his battalions and rather to discharge them than risk a war." He may have joked with young Twining about being ready to take on Sir Robert Abercromby at a pinch: he was in fact much too shrewd to be under any illusion about the result of a war in which the well-trained troops of the East India Company would be supported by regular British battalions. Leadership would decide the day and he knew too many senior British officers to suppose that his own mixed bag of mercenaries from half a dozen countries could ever be a match for them.

His military recommendations were dictated by this policy. He embodied them in a note, a copy of which exists in his uniform-case at Chambéry, to his old friend and comrade-in-arms, Lakwa Dada, now Daulat Rao's principal adviser. De Boigne urged that no European commander-in-chief should be appointed to replace him. The three brigades should remain independent of each other and should be encamped separately at safe distances.

His motives were mixed. At the back of his mind he still had the idea that he might before long return to India. He would naturally do so only as Commander-in-Chief and it would be better not to have to turn out someone who had been officially recognised as his successor. Apart from that, the only possible successor was Perron and although he was fond of the stocky little man who had served him so well, he did not consider him fitted for the supreme command. Many years afterwards he described him to Grant Duff as "a man of plain sense, of no talent, but a brave soldier." This was an underestimate, influenced by the fact that Perron and Daulat Rao between them had played into Lord Wellesley's hands and allowed him, in his own words,



MAHADAJI SINDHIA



ADÈLE D'OSMOND

FAREWELL TO INDIA

"to prepare the ruin of the work of General de Boigne"—and to accomplish it. Perron developed with responsibility and was more than just a brave soldier. What de Boigne distrusted about him, and with good reason as the event proved, was his political judgment.

* * *

The last link with the army was severed when de Boigne sold his personal bodyguard to the Governor-General. He had intended to offer it to the Nawab of Oudh but "Major Palmer prevailed upon him to give the refusal to the Bengal Government in the first instance, so that if an augmentation of the Company's cavalry were intended, Government might have the preference of a very fine corps, fit for immediate service." De Boigne asked £50 a head for his 400 horses, a total of £20,000 but this was to include all the arms, furniture and accoutrements of men and horses.

The government determined to close with the offer, "the terms not appearing unreasonable," and Palmer was authorised to conclude the agreement without delay. He did not delay, for on February 5th, 1796, he wrote from Lucknow to Sir John Shore to say that everything had been taken over, the regiment received upon the Company's pay from February 1st, and a return transmitted to the Commander-in-Chief.

There is no reason to suppose that the company made a bad bargain or that de Boigne did more than get his money back. But had the Governor-General been aware of the very intimate personal relationship between him and Palmer and that his first call on leaving Agra for Lucknow had been on Palmer at Fategarh, one fancies that the deal might not have gone through without a second opinion.

At any rate one may be fairly certain that Palmer did not mention to Sir John that he had just borrowed £3000 from de Boigne.

This was only one of many financial transactions with which de Boigne was busy during the eight months that he spent in Lucknow after his retirement. Since he made very careful and detailed notes of all of them in his clear handwriting it is easy to arrive at his exact financial position. As has been said, he was not a man who treated money matters lightly—or allowed others to do so. Palmer, for example, had to listen to a long “hard luck” story before he got his loan. De Boigne wrote to him at Fategarh:

“I have acquired the little I have with so much labours and hardships for the space of so many years and encountered so many dangers that . . . I find the greatest difficulty to depart with my money. . . I mean of such a large sum as loan, particularly so going to my natal place, where I will find many Beggarly Relations to provide for and not a penny to be further acquired . . . I have money, it is true, but so scattered that I would find it difficult to realise a lakh of rupees at the moment and God knows if every ship will find his way home again . . . I have £30,000 at Copenhagen, the conflagration of which place is to give me much subject of apprehensions till information from my agents is obtained . . . I have near five lakhs with the indigo merchants . . . I have nearly four lakhs of effects, including my regiment of cavalry, camels, elephants and other articles to be disposed of; no statement can be made of what it will produce, it may turn out to be a great deduction of my fortune as the pay of the men and feeding the cattles

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costs me about Rs.600 a day. So, my friend, give me a respite and I will give you a definite answer if I can or can't. By these few lines you'll see that I make no detours or dissimulations. . . ."

But it is only fair to de Boigne to add that he ended: "As to your Bond and steps proposed for the repayment of the loan, my being once in the snowy mountains of Savoy, my friend, I shall not trouble myself much of what and how things are going on the Ganges side; if it comes back, well, if not, it will be all the same."

With one Thomas Massyk, who owed him £50,000, secured on the proceeds of an indigo venture which had apparently gone wrong, he was much rougher. "You have a way of calculating and speculating peculiar to yourself," he writes, "but which can never be acceptable to people who have lent you their money or become security for you. You may make castles in the air and delight yourself in chimerical expectations and flattering speculations but you alone can inhabit the former and in regard to the latter, it should be proper to do it, with your own cash and property . . . I have acquired mine with so much toils and dangers, ruined my constitution, certainly I shall not leave it to others to run away with it . . . Were I willing to stay in the country another year I should have waited patiently the event and issue of the sale of the indigo and even perhaps have made you further advances but I can't . . . Moreover nothing vexes me so much as to see your ill-will and obstinacy in not delivering me from anxieties when in your power to do so. . . ."

He had been "yours most affectionately" to Massyk when he was on his way to Lucknow but he was far from

affectionate when he was still pursuing him four years later.

Even small sums of a thousand rupees (£125) were not forgotten and de Boigne writes to one Captain Preston, a brigade-major at Cawnpore, to remind him that he lent him that sum four years before. He presumes that Preston has entirely forgotten it and would not mention the matter were he not soon going to Calcutta and thence to Europe.

Then there was his son's *jagir*, the gift of the Raja of Jaipur. Knowing India and realising that there would be pandits amongst the Rajputs also, de Boigne left a note for Joseph Queiros, to whom he had given his power of attorney. Should payments stop, he was to write to the Raja "alleging that a thing of the kind, given by so great a Raja, is never taken back—that my health having obliged me to go down to Calcutta and perhaps Europe, I will soon be up again, when then he is not to reckon more upon my friendship."

Prudence suggested that he should not keep all his eggs in one basket. To William Paxton and Co. in London, where he had already remitted more than £120,000, he wrote in April: "Permit me to request that you'll further invest my property in the Funds. All the Cashes mine [sic] presently in your hands and to be in future received you'll be pleased to place in some good Mortgages, private, personal, good and undeniable security such as you may think advisable and productive of greater benefits to me. . . . America appears to be an eligible government and country to place money. Independently of the dividends and interest given being greater, it appears to be the most secure, many monied men of England itself transmitting a part of their property to that country as I am informed. . . ."

How much was there to show for those ten years? There it all was, neatly set out in the greatest detail in a balance-

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sheet which he must have spent days in compiling and copying before he sailed. It showed that he had, on arrival in Europe, £255,415. 2. 6 invested or to be invested. We may safely say that his fortune was at least a million pounds in terms of money to-day. Soldiers do not customarily retire with quite so much.

The statement is interesting because it was to serve also as a will and shows the provision which de Boigne proposed to make for his family. His son Ally Bux, who was to be baptised John Baptiste, but who was in fact baptised Charles Alexander Benet, was to receive £100,000. His daughter Banu Jain, who was to be baptised Helena but was in fact baptised Ann, was to get £60,000, a huge sum for a girl in those days, when nearly everything normally went to the eldest son. Three of de Boigne's brothers were to have £3000 each. (His father and mother were both dead.) To the hospital for the poor at Chambéry was to go £10,000.

And Hélène Benet, "the mother of my children?" "If she stays in Europe or returns to India, excluding her passage and jewels," she was to have £2500. Poor Hélène Benet, it would seem that she had fulfilled her purpose in producing the children. But in justice to de Boigne it must be said that he had every reason to believe that they would look after her so long as she lived, for, young as they were, they were devoted to her and remained so.

That she was devoted to de Boigne is clear from a letter which Martin wrote to him when the family came to Lucknow in April, 1792. "Your girl has had fever," he writes. "Tartar emetic and copper ought to put her on her feet and I think, as does Queiros, that the letters which you have written to her have done her good in the depression which followed the fever. Her children are well, thank God,

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but as for her, her health deteriorates continually and I think only you can cure her."

The remainder was to the children, with the exception of one other legacy of £2500 to be divided between "two other Begums, my women left at Delhi, if still living, General Martin to know." De Boigne was, of course, commonly credited with the usual seraglio and the customary flock of illegitimate children. But in fact we can identify these "two other Begums," from the confidential note left for Queiros.

One was "Mihrunissa." The other was a certain "Zinett," daughter of the late "Nawab Mohammed Kaun Said Amdanny" [its], whoever he may have been. I have not troubled to try to trace him because de Boigne describes her to Queiros as "a girl whom I have never touched . . . having been taken in by her mother, Fattima Begum . . . she turned out to be very inferior to the beauty said to be and expected. She lives at Delhi with her mother."

Apart from their legacies, these two—and Moti Begum, Mihrunissa's mother—were to be paid monthly allowances out of the interest on the money lent to Palmer. They were "to marry and take husbands if they chose or to live single just as they please; their conduct is not to be observed; suffice that they receive regularly their allowance, single or married."

Thus, while it would be too much to suppose that he was strictly faithful to her, it is evident that Hélène Benet was the only Begum whom de Boigne regarded as his wife and that Charles and Ann were the only children of whom he was aware.

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The family was now in Lucknow and de Boigne had the company of Claud Martin, promoted Major-General in the East India Company's service on May 30th, 1796, with effect from February, 1795, and of "Lise." He was thus able to watch the building operations at Constantia and to try out the subterranean rooms which Martin had already built under the principal apartments for use in the hot weather.

It was his last meeting with his old friend. Claud Martin died in September, 1799, aged sixty-four. He died a Frenchman, saddened by the fact that his country, to which he had always remained faithful, should be at war with the East India Company, whose uniform he had worn for so many years and with whose troops he had so recently served in the field. He left a fortune not much more than twice as large as de Boigne's, a proof, seeing the length of time that he had been in business and the opportunities he had had to enrich himself at Asaf-ud-daulah's expense, that he was neither an inordinately avaricious man nor a dishonest one.

He also left one of the longest and most curious wills on record. It does him great credit, for he makes the most minute provision for everyone, in India and in distant Lyons, who had any claim on him. (His gifts to the poor of Lucknow were still being distributed every month at Lise's tomb when I left.)

The passages dealing with "Boulone" or "Lise" are touching and show that if Martin did not marry her it was only because Lise herself refused. His curious palace of Constantia, La Martinière, was to become a college where, though he was himself a Frenchman and a Roman Catholic, boys were to be taught the English language and

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religion, and funds were provided for the creation of similar colleges in Lyons and Calcutta. Constantia was to be his tomb and he was buried in one of its underground chambers, designed for the purpose, with four plaster sepoy, as large as life, watching over him from niches, with arms reversed.

The tomb was ransacked during the Mutiny and Martin's bones scattered but a British colonel restored them. The College still exists and prospers and though now it can contain few, if any, English children, many sons of British officers were educated there. Amongst schools it is unique in having Mutiny battle-honours. Throughout the Siege of Lucknow the boys, under their master, Mr. Schilling, held the Martinière Post in the Residency, next to the Brigade Mess, with only a stiffening of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry to help them.

Martin's collection of books and pictures and tapestries and *objets d'art* was sold in Calcutta in 1800, his chandeliers being bought for Government House, but there is a good bust of him beside his tomb and Zoffany's charming portraits of him and Lise still hang in Constantia.

In the picture-gallery at Lucknow, one may study the portraits of the rulers of Oudh and follow their progressive degeneration. Yet even now that fantastic and ill-starred line is not extinct. Before I left Lucknow early in the last war, I used regularly to be visited by three charming old gentlemen. On more ceremonial occasions, such as a garden-party at Government House, only one could be present, since they had but a single brocaded coat, which they took it in turns to wear.

Their object was to obtain the support of *The Pioneer*, which I was then editing, in their claims for an increase in their allowance. As they pointed out, their families had

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naturally grown in numbers with the passage of time and what had already been insufficient to maintain some half a dozen members of the Royal House was not enough to provide even the barest necessities of life for, was it 167?

It was impossible not to sympathise with them. It was also impossible to get them out of the office without discourtesy. But at last I found, by accident, the way. I suggested that surely some of the younger generation must be working and thus in a position to help support their aged fathers and mothers and uncles and aunts? They gazed at me reproachfully and took their leave. The descendants of the kings of Oudh might have fallen pitifully low but at least they had not yet come down to work.

* * *

Having endured the worst of the hot weather in Lucknow, de Boigne said good-bye to Martin and Lise and Queiros, to William Palmer and "Fyze," and moved at the end of August to Calcutta, where he had told his agents to find a small, convenient, furnished house near the river for his family. Colonel Sir John Murray wrote personally to Henry Dundas, President of the Board of Control in London: "Mr. de Boigne is expected here on his way to Europe. It is important to us into what hands the succession may fall. He was considered a steady friend to the English but there are Frenchmen under him who have opposite dispositions . . . his troops fall into the hands of a man of doubtful character." (This was Perron.)

On September 4th he writes again to say that de Boigne has arrived in Calcutta in a bad state of health and that they have had a talk about affairs in northern India. "I am inclined to think well of him."

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De Boigne noted that he was taking on board with him £3250 in gold and over £30,000 worth of personal effects. He was still in Calcutta in November, for there is a huge list in his handwriting of goods purchased there during that month—577 “towels for table” or table-napkins, quantities of “Ninsooks,” plain and flowered, carpets, gold and silver “Pettecoats Pieces, Long Cloth, Neck’s cloths, chintzes, Cashmere shawls, sheets, silver etc. to a value of £5000.” “A small Black Trunk” contained pistols, “two bundles of Indostanne prints, one embroidered small cake-box, one plan of the Taj, eighteen old fashion waistcoats, two Mogul’s Topees, eleven small nankeen breeches, (presumably for Charles), one Ivory Back Gratter or scratcher” and other odds and ends of the kind which the returning resident of India wonders, on arrival in Europe, why he ever bothered to have packed. There were forty-three bales in all and it is characteristic of de Boigne that he does not note the weight as approximately nine tons but as 8. 19. 2. 22 tons at £16 a ton and works out the freight at £143. 15. 3.

When all the goods were safely stowed and Hélène and the children embarked, the *Cronborg* dropped down the Hooghli, homeward-bound, with de Boigne well equipped to take up family life in Europe but declaring to his London agents that he is “safe to return to India when and as soon recovered, well aware that the climate of Europe is no more likely to suit my health nor my temper. . . .”

PART TWO

A LOSING BATTLE

XVI

A Question of Status

HOMEWARD BOUND to Copenhagen and perhaps unable to enter the Thames because the mutiny at the Nore was at its height, the *Cronborg* called in at Deal on May 31st, 1797. There she disembarked de Boigne and his family.

For the first time in his life he set foot on English soil and was driven to London in a carriage sent to meet him by an obliging banker. Bankers are always ready to oblige rich men and, bankers apart, he could count on many old friends from India to make him welcome.

Unfortunately there had been no time to land the heavy luggage and household goods at Deal. While the carriage trundled on to London, the *Cronborg* carried them away to Denmark, to be back-shipped after her cargo had been discharged. The sequel was disastrous. The year before, de Boigne had been alarmed by "a conflagration at Copenhagen" which endangered £30,000 of his trading property there. Now he was to learn, within a few weeks of arrival in England, that the *Cronborg* was wrecked in the Baltic off Elsinore and that most of his treasures, his books, his pictures, his silver, his collection of Indian arms, his forty-five bales of linen and carpets and brocades must be considered lost.

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"My investment, made myself at the expense of five months' trouble," he writes plaintively to the Danish owners, "the choicest goods that could be procured in Bengal and in India, a part of it intended for my own use, for gifts to friends and to relations and in my baggage I had the most rare, curious and rich articles that I could collect in the course of twenty years' residence in India and which no money nor wealth can reemplace the like. My health being excessively bad at the time of my landing, in the end, to have no trouble with the Customs House Officers, I took nothing from the ship with me but a few changes of clothes so I find myself at the moment as destitute of every Indian article as if I had never been in India."

He estimates the loss at "near £25,000, having insured but a small sum, in consequence of my travelling in the same ship." In fact, some of the goods were salvaged, for there is a record of forty pieces of gold and silver brocade being in the Customs House at Copenhagen and in 1799 the Danish authorities decided that his luggage might be forwarded duty-free, with the exception of textiles, on which he had to pay the usual duty. But much was certainly lost.

It was, therefore, perhaps petulance which made him write, just a month after landing, to Thomas Massyk, ". . . by the little I have seen of Europe, it will never, to all appearance, suit my mind, and [I] shall never reconcile myself to it, after being so many years in India; as soon [as I am] in a perfect state of health, it is my fixed intention to return to my former station without loss of time."

He prefaces this with the remark "I arrived in this city [London] the 3rd ultimo and having as soon put myself in the hands of able Physicians, I find myself recovering

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very fast, so much so that I have every hope of my being able to return to the East Indies, where I hope to meet you in your usual good state of health."

This, however, has to be taken with a grain of salt. Massyk owed him about Rs.400,000 (£50,000) on the indigo transaction and by the same mail he was writing indignantly to his agents in Calcutta: "As I am confident that Mr. Massyk will plead inability to pay . . . if he don't give you immediate and reasonable satisfaction . . . that is plain and full dishonesty of him and a wish to defraud me of my property and secure himself an independency at my expenses; in that case you are not to suffer my being made his dupe. Try to get him down to Calcutta . . . then by a good warrant *Get him In* and have no mercy on him, as I can't then take it [nothing] but a fraud and pure villainy on his part. . . ."

An old saying at sea in my young days was: "The first turn of the screw pays all debts." It works both ways. De Boigne was neither the first nor the last to realise that the one slight chance of collecting outstanding debts in India was to threaten shortly to reappear there. (This is no special reflection on Indian standards of honesty: they are often high but distance seems to abate a debtor's sense of urgency.)

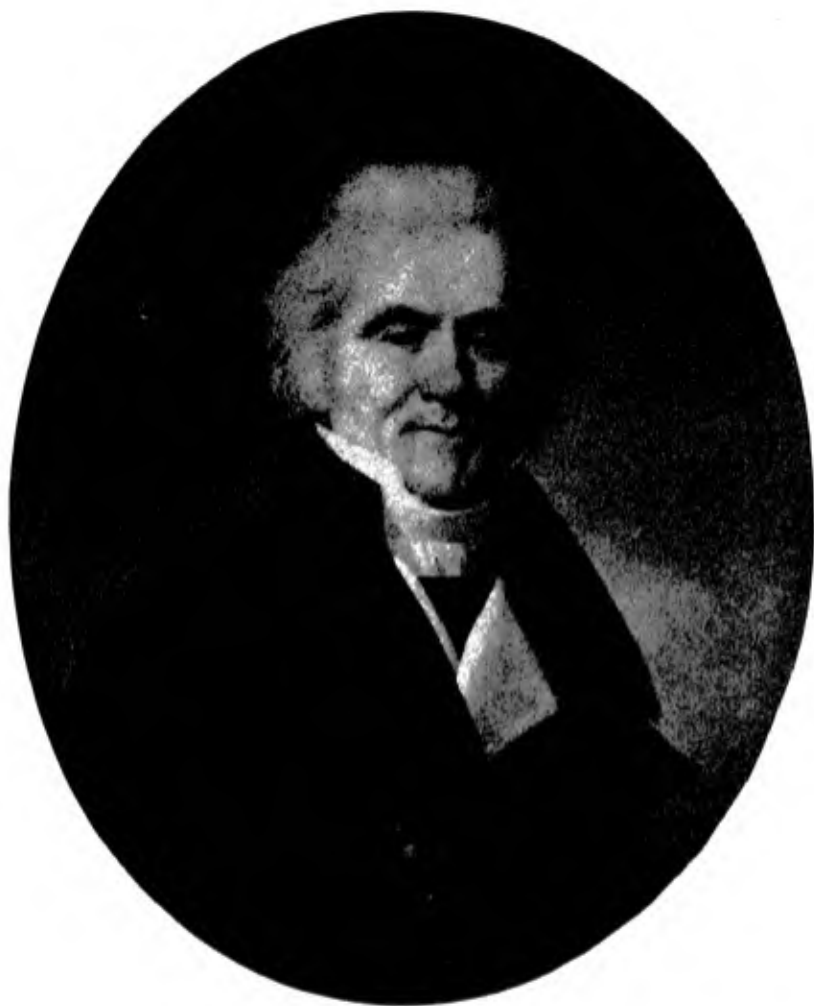
Would de Boigne in fact have settled down contentedly with H  l  ne and their children in his lodgings in Great Portland Street or in some village in the country, meeting old friends like Dr. Blane of Lucknow, occasionally attending "ordinaries" of the Madras Club at Willis's tavern, the Thatched House in St. James's Street, always watching his investments, corresponding with Perron and others in India and toying with the idea of going back?

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There were many in England who knew of his military prowess but what was he, after all, but a "Sepoy General", as Napoleon was later contemptuously to describe the Duke of Wellington? He was rich, very rich, but not fabulously so by the standards of returned "Nabobs" and certainly not by those of the great landed aristocracy of England. He had no social background which would secure him admittance to great English houses and, though courteous and a fine figure of a man, no social graces which would have made him sought after. He drank very little and nothing would have amused him less, or indeed horrified him more, than to pass the night in high play at White's or at Brooks's where a man might win or lose £30,000 at a sitting and where two of the best whist-players of the day were a Major-General Smith, late of the Indian Army, nicknamed "Hyder Ali," and his son called, appropriately, "Tippoo" . . . For a man who had held great power and position and had led a very active life, it was not an exhilarating prospect.

Moreover, except that he now had plenty of money, his situation was almost as irregular and compromising as when he had landed penniless in Madras only nineteen years before.

True, he was by birth a Savoyard and not a Frenchman. But Savoy, overrun in 1792, had been formally ceded to the French Republic only a year earlier, by the Treaty of Paris in May, 1796. And during the week-end in March that the *Cronborg* had lain at anchor off Jamestown, St. Helena, taking in water and provisions, a British whaling vessel had arrived with the news that negotiations for peace between Great Britain and France had been broken off. Nine French men-of-war were reported to have sailed



GENERAL PERRON



CHÂTEAU DE BUISSON ROND, CHAMBÉRY

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secretly from Brest, perhaps bound for St. Helena itself.¹

When, therefore, de Boigne stepped ashore at Deal, he was not only an alien but, technically, an enemy alien. Why did he decide to retire to England with his small family and his large fortune? How could he be so sure that the British Government would allow him to do so that he was able, even before leaving India, to send detailed instructions to his London bankers and agents about future investments there?

The first question is easily answered. Under the Directory, Savoy was appallingly misgoverned. It was not until Napoleon became First Consul nearly two years later that a stop was quickly put to the burning of châteaux and churches, the persecution of the clergy, wholesale deportations and the excesses of French fanatics. When de Boigne decided to return to Europe it was the last country in which, given a choice, a rich, middle-aged Savoyard, with no revolutionary sympathies, would choose to settle.

Given a chance. . . . But to establish oneself, in war-time, in an enemy country, must not that have required permission, even in the more easy-going days of the eighteenth century? All foreigners landing in England in fact required the Home Secretary's permission to leave the port of disembarkation. The entries are in the Home Office papers in the Public Record Office. There is also a secret Aliens' Letter Book. In neither does the name of de Boigne appear, or any conceivable variant of it. Nor is there anything in

¹ Between the Cape of Good Hope and the Coromandel Coast, the homeward-bound *Gronborg* passed a British transport, outward-bound for Calcutta. Aboard her was a young Irish Lieutenant-Colonel named Arthur Wellesley who was destined, within six years, to destroy all that de Boigne had built up in Hindustan.

the records of the India Office to indicate that he obtained permission before he left India.

Was the business put through secretly and at a high level? The Pelham Papers relating to the Home Office (1796-1803) were drawn blank. So were the private papers of the Duke of Portland who, as Home Secretary from 1794-1807, must surely have been consulted. Remained Warren Hastings who, though he no longer held an official position, might still have been able to pull a string for a friend. Here came the most surprising setback of all. In the vast mass of the Hastings papers I could find no letter to or from or about de Boigne, nor any mention of his name. Dr. Keith Feiling, who had studied the papers much more minutely for his life of Hastings, confirmed that there was nowhere any reference to him.

What, then, became of de Boigne's story, told to Twining in India only a few years before and to be repeated almost verbatim to Grant Duff at Chambéry more than twenty years later, of the great kindness Hastings had shown him? What of the letters of credit on Kabul and Kandahar which Asaf-ud-daulah gave him on the Governor-General's introduction? What of Hastings's interest in his project for exploring the overland route to Russia? Was all this apocryphal?

In fact the evidence of their connection exists, though I was lucky to find it. Anthony Angelo Tremamondo, Riding Master to the Army of Bengal, had retired from India and lived in Howland Street, Soho, under the name of Angelo. He became the father of some sixteen or seventeen children, many of whom were to play a great part in the history of the Indian Army. In the *Ancestor* of January, 1904, the Rev. Charles Swynnerton reproduced the baptismal

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records of fourteen of them, which he copied from the registers of St. Patrick's Church, Soho.

The third son was baptised there on August 10th, 1797, nine weeks after de Boigne landed in England. He was christened "*Warren Hastings Benet*" and his godfathers were "*Warren Hastings, Eques*" and "*Bennet de Boyne, Generalis.*" (With such godparents and such a name, he was the only one who did *not* serve in India!) It was clear that de Boigne had lost no time in getting into touch with Angelo—and thus with Hastings.

The Rev. Charles Swynnerton added that, among the many friends who used regularly to visit Anthony Angelo, he had found mention of "Warren Hastings and his wife, of Gavin Hamilton (the Scottish painter), of Zoffany and of General Benoit de Boigne." Despite the absence of letters between two such voluminous letter-writers, the long-standing connection between de Boigne and Hastings was established.

This was satisfactory as far as it went: it did not explain how de Boigne had been allowed to settle in England.

* * *

When, in pre-war days in Lucknow, I first began to interest myself in the life of General de Boigne and when, after it was over, my wife and I snatched odd hours from G.H.Q. to make a final search in the archives, before leaving New Delhi and India for ever, Chambéry and Buisson Rond seemed a long way off. And since the privacy of French families is not easily invaded, I had put in some years of desultory research in the India Office before I ventured to present myself in Paris to the Countess Elzéar de Boigne.

I had written what I hoped was a well-worded letter, in

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French as correct as many polishings could make it; I had sent with it an impressive introduction bearing a distinguished French signature. Yet, as I was shown into the house in the Rue Greuze, I felt as nervous as de Boigne himself must have felt on being ushered into the presence of Warren Hastings. For the Countess Elzéar de Boigne was, I had been given to understand, a somewhat formidable old lady. Widow of a French naval officer, she did not much like the English: Oran still rankled. My father had been a sailor. To have written the life of a German general would hardly be a recommendation to a member of a Norman family. Permission to see the de Boigne papers had been refused to others. . . .

In the event, my wife and I spent many happy and laborious days in the library of Buisson Rond, with the Countess Elzéar de Boigne, alone in the château with her maid, almost as excited as we were by our discoveries. For the battered old uniform-case which she had placed there had not been disturbed for half a century and perhaps de Boigne's Indian papers had never been so closely scrutinised.

The reader will have gathered that, with his letters, his accounts, his descriptions of his battles, with the letters of Palmer, of Martin and of Queiros, a door opened into the past. When, at the end of long, silent, summer afternoons, we had to go back to Aix-les-Bains, we could hardly bear to close it or to shut the lid of the case. But one essential document I almost overlooked. Tucked away in a corner, at the very bottom of the case, concealed by piles of accounts, parade-states, letters from Mahadaji Sindhia's ministers and the like, I came across a long piece of vellum. Unfolding it, I was startled to see that it bore the words "*George the Third*

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by the Grace of God. . ." and at the end the Privy Seal. It was dated "at Westminster this first day of January in the thirty-eighth year of our reign," which a rapid calculation showed to be January 1st, 1798, and it proclaimed that "our wellbeloved Bennet de Boigne, formerly of Chambéry in Savoy but now of Great Portland Street in the parish of St. Mary le bone" on that day became a British subject!

Folded in with it were a passport given in Hamburg three years later by George Rumbold, the British Chargé d'Affairs, to "Le General de Boigne, sujet de sa majesté" and a similar one given in Paris by His Britannic Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary to "The General Duboigne [sic], a subject of His Majesty." There was also a letter, written before the Peace of Amiens, by the Duke of Portland, in which the Duke presents his compliments to General de Boigne and begs to inform him that "His Majesty's subjects have no occasion for passports to embark for any part of the Continent except France and Holland." But in the one passport given in London, by the Minister Plenipotentiary of the King of Prussia, General de Boigne is described simply as "formerly in the service of the Mahratta Power in the Indies, now retired from all service" and no mention is made of his British nationality.

The secret was well kept, for until now it has never been divulged. De Boigne never referred to it, nor did anyone who has written about him—or against him.¹ There is no

¹ Victor de St. Genis, whose life of de Boigne was published in 1873, had access to many, though I think not all, of the papers. If he knew of the naturalisation, he concealed it. Herbert Compton, writing in 1892 for British readers, certainly did not know of it. It was new to the de Boigne family. M. Henry Bordeaux, the distinguished historian of Savoy and Member of the Academy, writing as late as 1956, remarks that de Boigne could doubtless have obtained British nationality had he wished, but that he distrusted England too much to think of applying for it!

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mention of him in the Home Office Denization papers, though full records began to be kept in that very year, 1798. But it is clear that there were those in high places in the British Government who knew very well how he stood with them and his presence in England is explained.

* * *

Secure, thus, in status, with an ample fortune in the funds, with friends of long standing and a family to which he was sincerely attached, de Boigne might have settled down and, like many another general retired from India, become progressively more bored and more boring. But Fate had reserved for him a last turbulent campaign. He entered on it singularly ill-equipped, for all his experience, and, could he but have known it, doomed to defeat from the outset at the hands of a seemingly defenceless opponent.

XVII

“*My Charming Adèle*”

IT MUST have been very soon after de Boigne's arrival that he fell in with an old friend whom he had not seen for nearly thirty years. This was Count Daniel O'Connell, Captain and Adjutant of the Regiment of Clare when de Boigne joined as an ensign. Together they had soldiered in the Ile de France, together they had endured the boredom of garrison life at Béthune. Then de Boigne had gone off to the Russian Army and their ways diverged.

At first O'Connell was the more successful. When de Boigne, having resigned his commission as an ensign in the East India Company, was on his way to Calcutta in 1782, in the hope of being able to proceed overland and seek fresh fields in Russia, O'Connell, a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Royal Suédois Regiment, was distinguishing himself at the capture of Minorca and Gibraltar. By 1788 he had appeared at the court of Louis XVI, kissed Marie Antoinette's hand, had his pedigree traced back to 1399 and duly received “*les honneurs du Louvre*,” which included the right to “*monter dans les carrosses du Roy*,” to play cards at Her Majesty's or the Dauphin's card-tables and to be presented to the King himself. Since such privileges necessitated a title, he was made Count O'Connell.

Came the Revolution and, with it, ruin. Indeed, he was lucky to escape with his life for, after the flight of the King and Queen to Varennes, papers were discovered which showed that he had planned to rescue them with German and Irish troops. Having served incognito "as a simple Hussar," in the ranks of the Royal army, "with more than my share of hardships and dangers," he fled to England and arrived in London, almost destitute, in the autumn of 1792. He was to all intents a Frenchman and had to relearn English. To the end of his life, he spoke it, as he did French, German, Spanish, Italian, Greek and even Latin, with a strong Kerry brogue.

By the time de Boigne met him again, though he was still hard up, his fortunes were on the mend. He had been given a commission in the newly formed Irish Brigade and had married the Comtesse de Bellevue, a widow with two children and estates in St. Domingo which might some day again be worth something. He was still a serious-minded soldier and in the habit of boasting, as de Boigne might have done, that he had never wasted a moment of his time or a penny of his money. Though O'Connell was six years the elder, in appearance and physique they were still remarkably alike, and the description of O'Connell in his old age would have fitted them both: "a tall, straight, handsome, old man who was kindness personified."

Did the prospect of listening to interminable reminiscences about military subjects make the Countess O'Connell decide that General de Boigne must be taken into society? Or was it de Boigne's own liking for music which made O'Connell procure for him an invitation to a musical party? However it was, a Mr. Johnson arranged for him to be present at one of the impromptu concerts which the

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Marquise d'Osmond was in the habit of giving in her house in Brompton Square on Sunday mornings and had made mildly fashionable in émigré circles, perhaps because Sappio, formerly music-master to the Queen of France, performed there with his wife.

They were both good musicians and when they sang trios the third part was taken by Adèle, the seventeen-year-old daughter of the d'Osmonds. It is said that de Boigne was in the outer part of the London double drawing-room when he heard so ravishingly pure and melodious a voice that he exclaimed: “The owner of that voice must be mine!” Unfortunately it was not the voice of Madame Sappio, who might have proved either unapproachable or complaisant without any serious consequences, but that of Adèle, who did indeed sing delightfully, by all accounts, and, when he succeeded in coming nearer, was seen to be as pretty as an angel,¹ with a mass of blonde curls long enough to come down to her feet, a dazzling white skin and great limpid dark eyes which gave her a deceptively soulful expression.

Since no one who perseveres to the end of this book is likely to put it down without having strong feelings, one way or the other, about Charlotte-Eleonore-Louise-Adelaide d'Osmond, known as Adèle, it is necessary to say something at this point about her parents and her upbringing. Her father came from an old and noble family. Whether the arms of the English branch were given to the lord of the county of Somerset by William the Conqueror, whether the tomb of St. Osmond in Canterbury Cathedral contains the

¹ “Just put ‘pretty as an angel’,” said a French Customs Inspector to a subordinate who was writing down her description from her passport. “That will be shorter.”

dust of an ancestor, whether the Chevalier d'Osmond was tutor to Richard II, these are questions of interest only to antiquarians: in France the family of d'Osmond, with arms which appear in the Salles des Croisades at Versailles, has long been extinct.

What is important is that the Marquis d'Osmond was an honourable, kindly and likeable man whom Adèle adored. Owing to the propensity of previous d'Osmonds for producing flocks of daughters who married badly, if at all, the family was very far from rich, even before the Revolution. Adèle's grandfather, a sailor, had, indeed, had to settle in St. Domingo, where he married a lady whose estates, like those of the Countess O'Connell, were large but encumbered, and although he sent home his six sons in turn, he himself never again saw France. However, his brother, Comte de Lyons and Bishop of Cominges, educated the five who survived (one was swept overboard on the voyage from St. Domingo), expensively and with care. Adèle's father, the eldest, became a soldier and because another and senior uncle, the Comte d'Osmond, was Chamberlain to the Duc d'Orléans (father of the notorious Philippe-Égalité who voted for the death of his cousin, Louis XVI, and himself perished under the guillotine), he was a Lieutenant-Colonel at twenty-five.

Under such auspices and with the run of the Palais Royal, where he was treated like a son of the house, he might, since he was a handsome man, have made a dazzling match, had he not fallen in love with a beautiful but penniless Miss Dillon, one of the thirteen children of the equally beautiful and equally penniless widow of a Mr. Robert Dillon of County Roscommon. Mr. Dillon, having sired seven of them in Worcestershire and six more in

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Bordeaux, dropped dead at the age of thirty-two, when the thirteenth was on the way.

It was then discovered that, although he had lived in great style, he had done so on capital, of which he had now reached the end. The Bishop of Cominges, though he approved of the charms both of mother and daughter, disapproved of so improvident a marriage. The Archbishop of Narbonne, however, who was a Dillon, could not agree that even a penniless Dillon was not good enough for a d'Osmond and came to the rescue. So did the Comte d'Osmond, when he saw that his nephew was not to be dissuaded. So did d'Osmond *père* in distant St. Domingo and despatched barrels of sugar to the value of 20,000 francs to meet the first expenses of the young couple.

In Picardy, where the Archbishop of Narbonne led a life more voluptuous than episcopal, the bride, because of her beauty and the romantic circumstances of her marriage, was an immediate social success. So she was when she was presented at Court, not only her beauty but her “proud and even haughty bearing” being much admired. The pair had, however, to be provided for. The Archbishop of Narbonne and the Comte d'Osmond therefore put their heads together again and Adèle's mother-to-be was appointed lady-in-waiting to Madame Adelaide, daughter of Louis XV. This suited her well for, as Adèle was later to record, “my mother was fond of royalty and endowed with Court instincts.” As one of the thirteen impoverished Dillons she can have had little opportunity or even hope of gratifying them but though a devoted wife, and in due course, mother, it must be admitted that she was born a snob—and an Irish snob at that.

Poor d'Osmond, who had no need to be a snob, would

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have much preferred to go on soldiering, for he was keen on his profession and popular with his men. Moreover, he had a strong objection to Court life, of which he, unlike his wife, had already seen enough. Because, however, she had to be in attendance at Versailles one week in every three, because they both disliked these separations and because they could not afford the expense of keeping up two establishments, to Court he had to go. It was, he said, the greatest sacrifice he could have been called upon to make for his wife.

What he particularly disliked was the system by which the gentlemen of the Court were invited to the royal supper parties. If they wished to be present they had to take their places on two rows of seats in the small theatre-room. The King would then survey them through a large pair of opera-glasses and write down in pencil the names of those he selected. The would-be guests retired to wait in an ante-room, where the names were called out in turn. The fortunate man bowed to the others and entered the holy of holies. When the last name had been called, the usher slammed the door on the rest.

One man came from Paris regularly for ten years without securing admittance, though no one not socially eligible would have dared to present himself. D'Osmond was unquestionably eligible. But he was a man of intelligence and independent character and it is to his credit that it took several years for his wife to persuade him to submit occasionally to the ordeal.

In such surroundings Adèle was born. Her beautiful mother was a favourite and as she was a good and pretty baby, Madame Adelaide made a pet of her. (The daughter of King Louis XV had never married and refused to be

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called “ Your Royal Highness,” not from any democratic principles, for no one could be more haughty, but because it seemed to her more distinguished to remain a Daughter of France.) At this period children were put out to nurse and remained in seclusion until they were old enough to be sent to a convent: a baby in a drawing-room was as rare as a lion. It was, therefore, a startling innovation when Madame Adelaide took little Adèle out for walks, followed by a pony carriage and a flock of servants, two of whom would carry her pet spaniel in a linen bag if his paws were likely to become muddy.

It was even more unconventional for so great a lady to go down on all fours to play with the child on the floor. When she caused to be made for Adèle a magnificent doll as big as herself, with a bed (in which Adèle slept until she was seven), a complete wardrobe, jewels and a gold watch by Lepine, the King’s watchmaker, the King and Queen came to the presentation. Thereafter, they too made a pet of the child and the King personally gave orders that if Mademoiselle d’Osmond’s dog wished to chase the royal poultry, the gardeners were not to interfere with him. The Dauphin was her playmate, the young Duc de Berry would dance with no one else.

In her first seven formative years, Madame Adelaide did everything possible to spoil her. Her parents, to do them justice, did not. Her father, though he took her to theatrical performances at Versailles, where the King would send for her to his box and invite her comments on the play, was interested particularly in her education and by the time she was three she could read and recite the tragedies of Racine. Her mother was determined that she should be good. Had not she herself been embarrassed to the point

of tears by the laxity of morals when she went to Court? (It was a distinguished ecclesiastic who said to her: "Do not worry, Marquise, one of your faults is your beauty, but that will be pardoned. But if you wish to live peaceably, take more pains to conceal your love for your husband; it is the one kind of love which is not tolerated here.") Nevertheless, it is not to be wondered at if Adèle came to consider herself a young person of importance and if she had "for her own name," as she later proudly admitted, "a passion which finds no counterpart in this age."

The Revolution came when Adèle was eight, and with it the end of all this. The adventures of the d'Osmond family are of great interest, for the Marquis, who saved Madame Adelaide and her sister from the mob and took them to Italy, had the story of the flight to Varennes from the lips of Marie Antoinette and himself transmitted her letters to Brussels, while Adèle, in tears, said good-bye to the wretched Queen under the eyes of the National Guard.

Before their final flight, the d'Osmonds made a trip to England. Disembarking at Brighton, the former Miss Dillon met her cousin, Mrs. Fitzherbert, whom she had known in Paris when Mrs. Fitzherbert was trying to escape the attentions of the Prince of Wales. Now, their union blessed by the Church if not by the Law, they were living domestically at Brighton and Adèle was taken into the Prince's dressing-room and shown his vast collection of shoe buckles, a pair for every day of the year. She was more impressed by this sight than by a week-end in the house of Lord Winchelsea, for life there, though magnificent, was not so magnificent, she said, as what she had already known.

For a time they returned to France but the health of Adèle's mother was now so bad and the political situation so

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dangerous that the Marquis d'Osmond sent the two to Rome, where, with the King's permission, he joined them in the spring of 1792. Then, with a wealthy English cousin by marriage, Sir John Legard, they moved to Naples, where they were kindly received by the Queen and where Adèle had the privilege of appearing with Lady Hamilton as one of Niobe's children in a “living statuary” performance.

Money was already running short and although the Queen wished to keep them at Court, they retired with Sir John Legard to Yorkshire, where her father occupied himself exclusively with Adèle's education. She worked eight hours a day under his supervision at history, metaphysics and political economy and was particularly interested, at the age of fifteen, in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. It was, therefore, no empty-headed girl whom de Boigne heard singing in the drawing-room of the little house at Brompton, to which the d'Osmonds had removed from Yorkshire, and whom he at once resolved, on so uncharacteristic an impulse, to make his own.

The campaign was opened by a dinner-party given by de Boigne, at which the d'Osmonds and the O'Connells were the only guests. Next day the Count O'Connell was commissioned by his friend to call on the Marquis d'Osmond and ask for the hand of Adèle in marriage. What followed has been recorded by Adèle herself and although she did not write her memoirs until 1837, when de Boigne had already been dead seven years—they were not published until 1907—there is no reason to doubt her general accuracy. (Her description and interpretation of incidents not easily verified are, like her good taste, generosity and gratitude, more open to question.)

“The only passion in my heart,” she says, “was filial

love." She knew that her mother was desperately anxious lest the Queen of Naples might be unable to continue the small pension which she had allowed her and that their feeble resources might fail. Her father was more reticent but he, too, was sleepless with anxiety. When O'Connell told her that de Boigne had an income of £20,000 a year and would give her a dowry of £3000, and hinted that, having no one in the world dependent on him, nothing would be dearer to him than his young wife and family, her mind was immediately made up.

For a seventeen-year-old girl (she says "sixteen," but that is a miscalculation), who complained that her great trouble was shyness, she tackled the business with considerable aplomb. She did not like the O'Connells because, coming from St. Domingo, the former Comtesse de Bellevue knew too much about her own Creole grandmother, of whom she preferred not to think. But "I wrote to Mrs. O'Connell" (Adèle did not recognise courtesy titles), "to ask her to invite me to luncheon, as she sometimes did, and to ask General de Boigne to meet me there. He was exactly punctual. I then committed the grave *but generous* mistake of telling him that I did not care for him in the least, and probably never should, but that if he were willing to secure my parents' future independence, my gratitude would be so great that I could marry him without reluctance. If this feeling was enough for him, I would give my consent, but if he asked for more I was too frank to promise him anything of the kind, either at the moment or hereafter. He assured me that he did not flatter himself with the possibility of inspiring any deeper feeling.

"I insisted that an income of £500 should be assured by contract to my parents, the deed to be signed at the same

time as my marriage contract. Mr. O'Connell undertook to draft this document. M. de Boigne then said that he could give me no more than £2500 as a dowry. I cut short the arguments which Mr. O'Connell was advancing by reminding him of the terms which he had proposed. I concluded all discussion and went home entirely satisfied.

“ I told my mother what I had done. She and my father, though much touched, begged me to reflect carefully. I assured them that I was entirely content, and this was true at the moment. I was in the full flush of youthful heroism. I had quieted my conscience by telling my suitor that I never expected to love him. I felt certain that I could fulfil the duties of my position and was in any case entirely absorbed by the happiness of extricating my parents from their difficulties. I did not understand that I was making any sacrifice. Probably at the age of twenty I should have been less courageous, but at sixteen one does not know that the rest of one's life is at stake.”

As for de Boigne, a man of forty-seven (not forty-nine, as Adèle makes out), falling in love with a girl thirty years younger than himself, should not have been surprised at anything that happened to him. He celebrated this not over-romantic betrothal by composing with the utmost care—and at excessive length: I have to shorten it by a third—what must surely be amongst the silliest and most self-deceiving love-letters in history. Creditable to him though parts of it were, one would like, even now, to think that he had sense enough not to send it. But the manuscript in his neat hand-writing, which I found in his uniform-case, was undoubtedly a fair copy, if it was not the original, afterwards retrieved.

"My dear and charming Adèle" (he begins),

"Your ready compliance to the demands I have made of you, learned through your father, claiming from me all gratitude, adds much if possible to the good opinion I had already formed of your sagacity and prudence and endears you more forcibly to me, so much so that if I felt at the time of my demand no more than a preference and partiality for you, my heart is now so much enflamed by the power of love, regard and esteem that in vain should I attempt to express its feelings by words. Nature has taken peculiar pains in the formation of your person, which to my eyes is an angelic form. The admiration of it is nevertheless much increased by what I perceive you to possess, generosity of mind and goodness of heart! rare qualities which, in a young lady being of a much superior value than the former, can't but promise happiness to the man who shall be fortunate enough to possess such an inestimable treasure.

"These being the opinions I have formed of you I will sincerely avow, my dear Adèle, that before I did see you I had never entertained a decided wish for a matrimonial state, leaving it entirely to chance and circumstances. If I have paid a kind of attention and I may say assiduities to some of the fair, I may affirm its having been more by way of diversion and as an amusement to the mind than from an inclination of heart which, having remained untouched till now, I offer you free from any engagements whatsoever.

"At my age free of those violent passions which often blind a young man, I shall keep the promises I may make you. My knowledge of mankind will be a certain pledge and a sure guarantee of my everlasting affections

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for you. I promise you to have no other wishes but such as may be perfectly agreeable to yours, well confident that yours will ever be reasonable and consistent with the principles of that cultivated and accomplished mind which you possess.

“Now, my dear Adèle, in abiding to my promises towards you can I expect in return, and can you promise me, your affections and attachment? The possession of your person alone could never satisfy me without that of your heart; in the latter alone can depend our mutual happiness. Venus herself with all her charms would not make mine should I not possess her heart. Consult well the dictates of your heart and attend to its impulsions, that no considerations whatsoever may divert you from the only object which is worth your cares and solitudes—happiness.

“As to myself, my dear Adèle, my resolution is taken and I can easily persuade myself that I should be the most happy being with you. I have well reflected on it, being wise enough as to know myself I don’t hesitate a moment of marrying you *yet a young girl*, and the innate tenderness I have always had for the fair, as also in the sensibility of my nature, always made happy when in my power of contributing and promoting the happiness of others.

“Without my being thought egoist I may say so much of me and I will assure you that did I not foresee all the happiness I propose myself in a matrimonial state, God forbid that I should ever think of contracting such a union. My reason will never abandon me so far and particularly so as the life of a Bachelor has nothing désagréable to me; and why should I change it but in

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the hope of meeting a friend and a companion ready to partake my griefs as my pleasures?

“With my love, my dear and lovely Adèle,

Your most sincere and affectionate friend,

Bt. de Boigne

A silly letter, it will be agreed. A self-deceiving letter because, if Adèle is to be believed, she had already made plain that her affections were not to be included in the contract. Unfortunately this was not the only deception involved. De Boigne may have been able to offer his heart “free from any engagement whatever.” Did he reveal that his occasional “assiduities to some of the fair” had resulted in two children, to whose mother he had been married, at least in the sight of God and his friends, and with whom, a few weeks before, he had been living happily enough in England?

Adèle implies that he did not. “His previous life was but little known,” she writes, “and he deceived me about his past, his name, his family and his antecedents.” For her, the worst humiliation was doubtless to learn that he was, by birth, M. Leborgne, the son of a hide-and-skin merchant, and had no title to the more aristocratic-sounding name of de Boigne: the existence of a couple of children “on the side” would not—and in fact did not—distress her nearly so much. Such things occurred in the best families.

Her father, however, was an honourable man and her mother a strict Catholic. It cannot be supposed that they would have handed over their young and lovely daughter to someone who was married and the father of a family. Nor, for that matter, can it be supposed that de Boigne, however infatuated, would have entered into a bigamous

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alliance. Not only must Count O'Connell have known of his circumstances; if the “Mr. Johnson” who arranged the fatal invitation was Mr. *Richard Johnson* of Edwards, Templer & Co., de Boigne's banker, as seems likely, he must have been even better acquainted with them, for this Mr. Richard Johnson was the same Richard Johnson who was assistant to the Resident at the Court of Oudh in 1782, when de Boigne was in Lucknow.

One may assume that de Boigne temporarily concealed the existence of his wife and family from the d'Osmonds but that he employed the six weeks which passed between his first seeing Adèle and his asking for her hand in dis-embarrassing himself of them. This would have been simple. William Palmer was not married to Hélène's elder sister and it is unlikely that de Boigne ever went through a marriage ceremony with Hélène, even under Islamic law. If he did, a divorce was a matter of minutes. He had only to repeat three times “I divorce you,” in the presence of two or more Muslim witnesses and the marriage would have been dissolved. In any case it would not have been legal in the eyes of the Catholic Church.

Writing many years after his death and in defence of his general character, John Walker, Geographer to the India Office, says:

“When General de Boigne arrived in England from India, he took a house in London in the neighbourhood of our family, where Mrs. Bennett soon became on intimate terms with us. After his marriage to Mlle d'Osmond she came to our house. An eminent lawyer at the time offered to take up her case and bring an action against the General, but she declined it on account of her children. She afterwards retired to Enfield, a pleasant village near London,

where she lived quietly and respectably and was received in every company, being considered his legitimate wife. Except for this unfortunate circumstance, the General was looked upon as a highly honourable man, and if he acted otherwise while in India, there were many gentlemen who were acquainted with him in that country and would have made it known, instead of which he was much respected by them and they were visitors to his house."

According to the standards of his day, de Boigne acted correctly enough by H  l  ne. A sum of money was deposited in the Bank of England "amply sufficient," according to John Walker, who became her trustee, "to enable her to live comfortably." (It yielded  300 a year but  300 a year then was equivalent to at least  1000 a year to-day and the children's school bills and expenses were to be paid separately.) The house at Enfield was bought. Mary Walker was de Boigne's god-child and the Walkers could be trusted to look after H  l  ne. So could the Angelos. So could Dr. Blane, who had known her and the children in Lucknow when Charles was a baby. It had not been unremunerative to be surgeon to Asaf-ud-daulah and they were now living in some style at Wickfield Park. So could her "God-Mama," Mrs. Burke. H  l  ne herself could be trusted to bring up the children. Having thus disengaged himself from his past, de Boigne was free to devote all his thoughts to Ad  le.

Quem deus vult perdere. . . What drove de Boigne into this act of crazy folly, the only one recorded in his long life? Ad  le remarks sourly that: "He had been paying some attention to a pretty girl, the daughter of a doctor" (Dr. Blane, perhaps). "She had received his advances somewhat coldly, or had treated him with a fickleness which he did not

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understand. On leaving her house, he suddenly remembered the young girl who had appeared to him as a vision some weeks before. He wished to prove to the disdainful beauty that another girl, younger, prettier, better-educated and of higher birth would accept him. He offered his hand and I accepted him, unfortunately for both of us."

Unfortunately for both of them . . . but financially not without benefit to the d'Osmonds. On June 8th, 1798, the marriage settlement was signed. Adèle was to get £400 a year absolutely. She was also to get £2500 a year on de Boigne's death, to be reduced to £2000 if she had no children and married again. Her parents were to get their £500 a year. De Boigne agreed to invest some £70,000 in "gilt-edged" to ensure these payments. Next day he went out and bought a fine cocked hat for himself from André the hatter and a cameo necklet and bracelets for £63 for Adèle from a Sackville Street jeweller. He had already bought a diamond engagement ring for £110 and a grand piano from John Broadwood.

Three days later, on June 11th, 1798, he and Adèle were married at the French Chapel. The nuptial benediction was given by Antoine Eustache Osmond, "Bishop of Cominges in France but now resident in London." Arthur Richard Dillon, Archbishop and Primate of Narbonne, was present to reinforce the blessings of the Church. Witnesses on behalf of the bride's family were the Duc d'Uzes, the Marquis de Bouzoles, and M. Charles Alexandre de Calonne, who had been Controller of Finances under Louis XVI, but was singularly unsuccessful in controlling either those of his country or his own.

Count Daniel O'Connell was the bridegroom's friend. Messire Benoît de Boigne was described as the elder son of

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M. Jean Baptiste de Boigne of Chambéry in Savoy and, of the former Mademoiselle Elène de Cabet. Amongst the seven French Dukes and the tribe of titled relations of the d'Osmonds who figure in de Boigne's list of those to be invited to the wedding breakfast, it is perhaps noteworthy that he includes Lord and Lady Teignmouth (formerly Sir John and Lady Shore) and, a substantial and rascally ghost from the past, Sir John Macpherson, to whom Lord Macartney had given him an introduction when he threw up his commission in Madras and went off to Calcutta in 1782. Lord Teignmouth, who had been back from India only a few months, was planning to devote himself to religion and good works. Macpherson, lucky, in the opinion of Lord Cornwallis, not to be impeached, had been back for ten years and was now a Baronet, a Member of Parliament, a self-styled expert on Indian affairs and ready to serve anyone connected with India who would pay him. One may assume that he accepted the invitation.

The wedding was thus a fashionable one. It took place just twelve days after Adèle and de Boigne had had their first semi-private conversation.

XVIII

“ *A Very Stormy Union* ”

As THE reader has already gathered, it cannot be related of this ill-assorted pair that they married and lived happily ever after. On the contrary, the pen of a top-ranking American sports writer, a Damon Runyan or a Grantland Rice, would be needed to describe, round by round, the furious contest which instantly ensued. Unfortunately for the posthumous reputation of de Boigne, a precursor of such experts, little inferior to them in verbal skill and far surpassing them in virulence, was not only at hand but actually in the ring. Adèle's account still holds the field, for her *Memoirs*, as witty and entertaining as they are spiteful, were a best-seller in their day and when she came to write them, nearly forty years after the wedding, she had forgotten and forgiven nothing.

She begins, quietly enough, with “ M. de Boigne was neither so bad nor so good as his individual actions might lead one to believe,” but after this preliminary and perfunctory touching of gloves, she moves swiftly in to the attack. “ A member of the lower middle class by birth,” she continues, “ he had been a soldier for many years. I do not know by what paths he had passed from an Irish legion in the French service to the back of an elephant, from which

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he commanded an army of 30,000 sepoys but . . . the rapidity with which he rose from the lowest rank to the position of commander-in-chief and from poverty to vast wealth had never permitted him to acquire any social polish and the habits of polite society were entirely unknown to him.

"An illness from which he was recovering had forced him to make an immoderate use of opium, which had paralysed his moral and physical powers. Years of life in India had added the full force of Oriental jealousy to that which would naturally arise in a man of his age; in addition to this, he was endowed with the most disagreeable character that Providence ever granted to man. He wished to arouse dislike as others wished to please. He was anxious to make everyone feel the domination of his great wealth and he thought that the only mode of making an impression was to hurt the feelings of other people. He insulted his servants, he offended his guests and his wife was, *a fortiore*, a victim to this grievous fault of character.

"He was an honourable man, trustworthy in business, and his ill-breeding had even a certain kind of heartiness; but his disagreeable temperament, displayed with all the ostentation of wealth, the most repellent of all forms of outward show, made association with him so unpleasant a business that he was never able to secure the friendship of any individual in any class of society, notwithstanding his numerous benefactions.

"At the time of my marriage he was somewhat stingy, but of luxurious tastes, and if I had wished I could have expended more of his fortune than I have done. I think that an older and cleverer woman, with greater powers of dissimulation and attaching greater value to the pleasure

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which money gives, with her eye upon that will of which he was always speaking and which I have seen rewritten five or six times, would have been able to do better both for herself and him in my situation. I was constantly astounded by the succession of evil passions which I saw displayed before me, while his ridiculous jealousy, expressed in the most brutal manner, aroused my surprise, my anger and my disdain."

Had this been a letter to an intimate girl friend, written a few weeks after marriage, it might be excusable, for it undoubtedly contained a proportion of truth. The Marquis de Faverges was to say of de Boigne many years later: "He has always liked women, but as a despot. His manner towards them was a mixture of gallantry and aloofness or, rather, severity; he did not need them as companions." This was long after his experience with Adèle but it is probable that his attitude towards women had intensified rather than changed.

Moreover, he himself left it on record that, during his last four years in India, he was in such constant and almost intolerable pain that his daily dose of the opium to which he was driven had been increased from one grain to ten and even fourteen. "This made me lose my memory and destroyed in me all ambition and all love of Glory."¹ Only a man of very strong physique and an iron will could have broken himself of the habit, as he did, but even after a long sea voyage and a year in England the process of recovery, both from the illness and the drug, must have been attended by extreme nervous strain. Nervous irritability and irrational jealousy may well have accompanied the cure. "Irrational," because, whatever else may be said about

¹ Asaf-ud-daulah used to take 40 grains of Turkish opium a day!

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Adèle, there seems to be little doubt that, physically, she was cold. In spite of her great good looks it does not seem that there was ever any open scandal about her in that scandal-mongering age. Throughout her life she seems to have preferred a *cavalier servente* to a lover. Her first introduction to matrimony, like that of many another young girl, was probably disagreeable and alarming. Yet she cannot have assumed, as she tried to make out, that no intimacies would be expected of her, for she had accepted the prospect of "a young family" without protest at her interview with O'Connell. Nor can she have been entirely shattered by it since on June 14th, three days after the wedding, she resumed her singing lessons with Sappio.

One may sympathise with her but two things about her piece of special pleading prejudice one against her. The first is that it contains many obvious absurdities. De Boigne was not a courtier and he came of bourgeois stock. But he was an educated man and he had been accepted as a gentleman, not only by his brother officers in four armies (he had never served in the ranks), but by men of birth and high position, of great worldly experience and of many different nationalities, from Count Orlov to Lord Macartney, from the Marquis d'Aigueblanche to Sindhia. And to realise how fantastic it is to picture him as a mere boor from a barrack-room, one has only to turn back and consider again the impression which he made upon Thomas Twining.

Equally fantastic is it seen to be to assert that "he was never able to secure the friendship of any individual in any class of society," when one remembers in what terms, not merely of respect but of the warmest personal affection, so many men of all classes wrote to him and about him.

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The other aspect of the misrepresentation is more repulsive. Adèle wrote after her husband was dead, she wrote after she had lived as a rich woman for nearly forty years on his money and was to enjoy it for thirty years more; she wrote these intimate and malicious reminiscences for the entertainment of her young nephews and she wrote with an eye to future publication. Of that there is no doubt for, before her death, she had written two novels which were, in fact, thinly-veiled autobiography and they were with the printers. As a witness for the prosecution she is not, therefore, to be trusted.

"We lived in great style," she goes on, "constantly giving fine dinners and magnificent concerts, at which I sang." (This is substantiated by Sappio's receipted bills: concerts were given on Sundays and he charged £5. 5. 0 for his services; there are also ninety private singing-lessons at half a guinea each.) "M. de Boigne was glad from time to time to exhibit the beautiful and well-articulated machine that he had acquired. Then his Eastern jealousy resumed the upper hand, he was furious because I had been seen or heard and especially if I had been admired or applauded, and told me so in the language of the guard-room."

It was doubtless consoling that "the most distinguished members of English and foreign society used to be present," though time, one suspects, had painted the lily, for there is no mention by contemporary gossip-writers of Madame de Boigne or her concerts. It must also have been a great satisfaction to Adèle that "the Orleans princes often came and dined at my table," even if they came "always as princes: their manner precluded any familiarity."

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"A clod—a piece of orange peel

"The end of a cigar—

"Once trod on by a Princely heel,

"How beautiful they are!"

as Calverley was to write later—and snobbery is, indeed, of all idiosyncrasies the most enduring.

Having reached the summit of social ambition before she was seven and being herself the inheritor of a noble name (she always writes more appreciatively of her d'Osmond father than of her Dillon mother), there was no reason in the world why Adèle should have been a snob. But it was once remarked that "a crook's a crook but a gentleman crook's a proper b——y crook" and it is also true that there is no snob like a well-born snob. Even at seventeen, Adèle professed liberal opinions; as she grew older she was regarded as almost dangerously advanced in her views. Snobbery, she maintained, was the one weakness she could not tolerate. Yet the clue to her character is that she never ceased to be a social snob, even when she became an intellectual one.

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After just on a year of "a very stormy union," de Boigne offered to hand Adèle back to her parents and she leapt at the offer. Since he proposed to allow them the full £3000 a year, £2000 of which would not have been payable until his death, and himself to go abroad, he cannot be said to have behaved ungenerously, though Adèle makes no mention of the terms.

He was deeply hurt and now for the first time we learn a little of how things looked from the other side. A Mrs.

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Standish, “nearly connected by blood” with the d’Osmonds, writes from Park Street, three days after the separation, to say that “it is with deep concern but without surprise that I have learned of the disagreeable extremity which you have been induced to take with respect to my relation, Madame de Boigne. . . . At the risk of being thought indiscreet [I wish] to express how much I lament that such unparalleled kind of behaviour on your part should not have met with the return it deserves . . . I hope that if ever a beam of reason enlightens that deluded family and makes them sensible of their own improper behaviour, your generous nature might condescend to overlook the past and receive the unfortunate Adèle once more to your favour. [But] if the die is cast for your eternal separation, Mr. Standish and I think it incumbent on our feelings to testify the admiration with which we have beheld your many noble and generous private virtues. . . .”

In his uniform-case, de Boigne preserved not only Mrs. Standish’s letter but a copy of his own reply. “Erroneously did I believe,” he writes, “that a well-acquired fame, reputation, fortune, health, honesty and a good heart would be, to a generous mind, an equivalent of a deficiency in the refined and polished manners of a Courtier and the elegant, artful addresses of a *Petit Maître*.

“As fate will have it, so I must submit to it. But— notwithstanding my respect for the father and mother of Madame de Boigne—I can’t forbear from a reflection, which is that to the great excess of paternal affection I attribute the principal cause of all our misfortunes, and also from an error which has ever existed in the system of a female French education, much being given to the attainment of superior talents but little to those inferior qualities

indispensable to the enjoyment and happiness of a domestic life."

He sees very little hope of Adèle mending "the hauteur and decided character which she prides herself to have" and says that "to be coupled, without ceasing to be alone, and to be looked on as a stranger instead of a friend," while it might seem natural to a man of the *Beau Monde*, would be to him a Monstrosity. Nevertheless, should Adèle ever bring herself to regard him as one of her best friends and take a warmer interest in their mutual happiness, "with joy and pleasure shall I receive her in my arms."

The omens were hardly favourable. In a rather pathetic note, in which his agitation is reflected even in his handwriting, unchanged throughout his long life and usually of copy-book neatness, de Boigne recorded "*The expressions of friendship and affection employed by a young wife towards her husband in the first eleven months of their marriage.*" From the itemised list, it is clear that Adèle's tongue could be as wounding and spiteful as her pen: "I never married you from friendship, still less from love. I saw in the arrangement no more than a marriage of convenience, particularly as neither your person nor your manners pleased me . . . Had I realised that you had not as large an income as you told me, or that, if you had it, you would not spend it, I would never have married you."

Then figures the bed, one of the rocks, we may surmise, on which the marriage came to wreck. "I thought that a man of your age," Adèle is reported as saying, "marrying me as young as I was, and with my birth and talents, would not have demanded from me more than Regard and not even Liking and that, had you been prudent and sensible,

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you would have been content to be my Husband and very satisfied to sleep near me. . . .

“ Had I been able to foresee or to imagine that you would require from me more than I could give you or had ever thought of giving you, I would never have married you. A man of your age, marrying a woman of mine, could and should have waited. . . . I detest and abhor you and, what is more, I always shall detest and abhor you and I shall never be reconciled to you! ”

That there may have been something in de Boigne's complaint of excess of paternal affection is suggested by another quotation, “ Understand that my father is everything to me! Don't imagine that I could ever love you as I love my father. My father will always be my only confidant.”

“ I was received with joy by my parents,” writes Adèle in her *Memoirs*. “ This determination, however, did not please the rest of my family or my society, who wished to use the millionaire for their own purposes and cared little if I paid for the privilege . . . M. de Boigne had no sooner abandoned his prey than he regretted his action. Forthwith my relatives and all the most distinguished members of the émigrés entered his service. One undertook to spy upon my actions, another to question my servants. This one had interest in Rome and could procure the annulment of my marriage. That one could find flaws in the contract, etc., etc. . . . In short, everyone proceeded to persecute a child of seventeen, though they had overwhelmed me with flattery but a moment before. . . .

“ M. de Boigne himself was very speedily disgusted and closed both his purse and his house. I afterwards saw in his possession various denunciations of my conduct and base

offers of personal service. He had been careful to preserve the names of the individuals concerned and the amounts which had been asked and paid. These names were sufficiently distinguished to please his plebeian pride and he discovered a new form of exasperation in showing them to me."

Not very pretty behaviour on de Boigne's part, perhaps. But he had to protect himself and the temptation to prove to Adèle that the *Beau Monde* was not on her side, that noble members of it, including her own relations, were prepared, for money, to sink to actions which even the despised "lower-middle-class" might have thought unworthy, must have been almost irresistible. That it was "exasperating" to her one can well believe. To find de Boigne himself "very speedily disgusted," though welcome, must have been an added blow to her patrician pride, for pride, as she so clearly implies, was not a luxury to which plebeians were entitled.

Nevertheless, a reconciliation was arranged. "M. de Boigne promised to reform," writes Adèle, "while I felt vexed by the injustice of public opinion, which under the influence of his agents and his money, regarded me as to blame. I therefore decided to rejoin him at the end of three months." (There is nothing to suggest that any contribution to their happiness was to be forthcoming from her.)

In August they were together again at Ramsgate, where de Boigne must have been glad to have the company of Count O'Connell, and in November, armed with a sheaf of introductions from Lord Grenville, Foreign Secretary in Pitt's Government, they set out on a tour of Germany, the Tyrol, Austria and northern Italy.

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Amongst the letters of introduction is one from Dillon Martinville, Adèle's maternal uncle, to Lady Guifard [sic] in Vienna, "I need give him no other recommendation, my dear Caroline," writes Martinville, "than to say that he has rescued my sister and her husband from want and misery . . . that he has put my niece in a state of opulence for the present and the future and that he has given a thousand other proofs of generosity to her family. It is for Madame de Boigne to repay all this to her husband by behaving well towards him, as he deserves . . . He is not a courtier but he is an excellent man whom you cannot help respecting . . . he may lack good breeding but certainly not a good character."

Adèle had, however, another grievance. She was taken to Verona "to see the sisters of M. de Boigne, whose existence he had concealed from me." The journey abroad was followed by a visit to Scotland and this was much more to Adèle's taste. "I was welcomed to the Duke of Hamilton's house like a member of the family," she writes, "the daughters professed to discover a resemblance between myself and the portrait of Queen Mary Stuart preserved in the palace at Holyrood . . . This resemblance, true, or false, made me so public a character that on the racecourse and in public places I was followed by a crowd. . . .

"Returning through Northumberland, we stopped at Alnwick, the beautiful and historical seat of the Dukes of Northumberland . . . We also stopped at the magnificent residence of Lord Exeter . . . We went from house to house and were shown great attention everywhere . . . no one who has lived in the serious society of the British islanders can understand the importance of that magical

word 'fashion'." Even de Boigne gets a grudging pat on the head. "M. de Boigne," writes Adèle, "was less surly than usual. High society, when it was accompanied by wealth and the ceremony of aristocratic life, seemed to overpower him, and he treated me diplomatically, as he saw that society welcomed me."

That he might be welcomed for his own sake, for example at Alnwick, having been befriended by Lord Algernon Percy before she was born; that at a time when Britain was still ringing with the story of the storming of Seringapatam and the death of Tipu, implacable enemy of the British, even Dukes might find interesting the conversation of a man with de Boigne's intimate knowledge of Indian affairs and unrivalled reputation as a commander of Indian troops—such possibilities do not appear to have occurred to her, either then or forty years later.

"On the whole this tour was one of the pleasantest experiences of my youth," writes Adèle. But early in the following year, she was back again with her parents. "I shall give no detailed description of our married life. It is enough to say that when we were separated he was in despair and thought he adored me; but when we were united he was wearied by my society and conceived an antipathy to me and on five or six occasions left me for ever. All these separations were accompanied by scenes which poisoned my youth, a time so ill spent that it had passed before I realised the fact, and I found that it had gone and I had not enjoyed it. . . .

"I could tell a long story of the different manners in which M. de Boigne annoyed me. I use the word manner of set purpose, for it was rather of the form than of the

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result of his treatment I had to complain. Experience alone can enable anyone to realise how these petty malignities, trivial as they separately were, can make life intolerable. . . .”

Her father's charges are more precise and it is only fair to Adèle to give them. In a letter written to de Boigne after the second separation, on March 11th, 1801, he does not beat about the bush. “When, after eleven months of a treatment of which you have yourself recognised the injustice,” he writes, “you brought your wife back to me on May 19th, 1799, her heart was so wounded that death seemed to her preferable to the misery of living in your power. Little by little I managed to heal the wounds which you had inflicted; everything of which my daughter complained I put down to the mistakes of love. Her inexperience of this emotion made me excuse the past and gave me hope for the future.

“Such were my feelings about Adèle when you asked me to help in bringing about a reconciliation and promised in writing to make her happy. I believe you meant to do so. I therefore used all the influence I had over her and returned her to your arms at Ramsgate, telling you that this was my last effort and that, if domestic troubles again arose between you, I would not be dragged into them again on any pretext. However, to-day, having blamed me, I do not know why, for refusals of which you complain, you ask me once more to use my influence with Adèle. . . . Her arrival has interrupted this reply. I have shown her your letter; she has refused to discuss it; she has gone out declaring that her extreme unhappiness deprives me of any right to ask for new sacrifices from her.

“As you say, she is twenty years old. I would add that

she has had three years' experience. I do not think that she has the unreasonableness of a child. She alone can and ought to determine the limit of her endurance; I have often told her that I regretted that it was not equal to the duty expected of her." It would seem that "refusals of which you complain" were the operative words.

As for de Boigne, to the end of his life he carefully tended his little garden of bitter weeds and was, or imagined himself, broken-hearted. Only a few years before his death he set down on half a sheet of writing-paper, for no one's eyes but his own, a final *ad misericordiam*, in almost the same terms as he had used in his letter to Mrs. Standish. He had, he writes, believed that he had reached the peak of happiness when he gave his heart to so amiable, agreeable and talented a young person.

"Falling in love for the first time, I completely abandoned myself to this pure and sincere emotion. Alas! how could I ever have foreseen that she who should have made my happiness, would become a source of misery for me and would plunge me into a sea of sorrow . . . that, in return for all my love and tenderness, far from winning her affection or even her friendship, I would be rewarded only with her hate and her disdain? Disappointed both in others and in myself, I sank into melancholy and despair. . . . Happiness is not more than a delusion."

For three years de Boigne had been engaged in learning empirically that a man of forty-seven who is foolish enough to insist on marrying a girl of seventeen should at least avoid the crowning folly of falling in love with her. The East should have taught him that, but he had no leisure to turn his eyes eastward. It was, perhaps, as well, for there was no brightness for him in that familiar eastern

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sky, no longer a place where he could be once more the great de Boigne, the incomparable commander whom not even Sindhia had ever thought of treating with discourtesy, of whom Lord Cornwallis himself, a Governor-General as able as he was incorruptible, spoke only with respect.

XIX

Retreat to Chambéry

DE BOIGNE had set up his beautiful young bride in some style in London. Just before the wedding he bought the lease of 47 Portland Place, a fine town house with an Adams frontage.¹ He was on the point of buying Claremont, the palace which Robert Clive built at Esher and which was to become a refuge for exiled royalty, when the second break with Adèle, in March, 1801, brought these domestic plans abruptly to an end. Early in April he applied to the Duke of Portland for a passport to Hamburg, to be told the following day that, as a British subject, he did not need one.

In fact he did not go abroad at once and there must have been another reconciliation with Adèle for he writes in June from Caernarvon to, of all people, the long-suffering Hélène, to say that he is about to visit Manchester, that he does not propose to return to London for at least six months, that he is "a little more happy than I have been for these

¹ This was later the London address of Lord Roberts of Kandahar. But if an Indian *genius loci* was at work it must have been confused by the fact that the numbers were changed in 1865. De Boigne's house, then renumbered 55, no longer exists. Lord Roberts's house, in which he wrote *Forty-one years in India*, is now the Polish Embassy.

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three years past" but that he is "afraid it will never turn out a lasting happiness."

Evidently it did not last even the six months, since in November he writes from Hamburg to Lord Pelham for permission to pass through France to Savoy. (Hostilities between Britain and France had ceased on October 2nd, but the Treaty of Amiens was not signed until March 27th, 1802.) He asks that the reply be sent to Frankfurt and there he must have set about trying to forget his sorrows. On December 27th the gossip-writer or social editor of a Frankfurt newspaper published a "piece" about him. With its mis-spelling of his name and its many errors of fact it proves that there has been no marked deterioration in the accuracy of gossip-columns since 1801.

"An Indian Nabob, last from England, who has resided here these several weeks in the English Hotel, spends astonishing sums of money," it begins. "He is properly a Savoyard by birth, is called La Brone, was formerly a Lieutenant in the Sardinian service but threw up his commission and repaired to the East Indies, where he espoused the cause of Hyder Ally, whose troops he exercised after the European manner. He was advanced to great dignities by that monarch and even honoured with a whole Princedom. He was of infinite service to Hyder, and also to Tippoo Saib afterwards, against the English, whose party he at length joined, and was one of the principal instruments in annihilating the Empire of Tippoo Saib.

"He has with him three carriages and six horses; bears the title and wears the uniform of an English Lieutenant-General and has, it is asserted, an income of

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44,000 pounds sterling. He gives balls here which would by no means disgrace a royal entertainment, pays weekly 30 louis d'ors for his lodgings and, daily, 11 florins per head for 12 persons who dine at his table. He gave a Ball yesterday to 300 persons which, for music, illuminations, collations and supper he, by contract, paid 2200 florins."

There is no mention of Adèle, now restored to her father in Brompton Square. De Boigne's brother, Joseph, had, however, joined him and one can only suppose that the rather pathetic purpose of this extravagance in a foreign city was to prove to Joseph, to himself and, indirectly, to Adèle that, thanks to his wealth, he was not as dependent on her for happiness as in reality he was.

The nonsense about "Hyder Ally" and "Tippoo Saib," whom de Boigne never saw, still less served, and who, with his empire, was not "annihilated" until three years after he had left India for ever, is quoted only to show how legends are created. Twenty-seven years later de Boigne was obliged to prosecute a Piedmont émigré ex-officer who tried to blackmail him by offering to suppress, for 6000 francs, a book, still in manuscript, in which was to be revealed the fact that the downfall of Tipu was due to the treachery of his intimate friend de Boigne, an agent in the pay of the English. Forty years after the blackmailer had gone to gaol, de Boigne's grandson had to bring a criminal action against an author and printer in Chambéry for repeating precisely the same charges in an article in the *Courrier des Alpes*!

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From Frankfurt, de Boigne went to Paris, where he was mentioned in the press amongst "foreigners of distinction" as "the English General Boyne, who is possessed of a revenue of 20,000 guineas and who disposes of his fortune in such a way as to make happy every person who surrounds him," an impression on which it would have been interesting to have heard Adèle's comments. He did not obtain his passport for Savoy from Anthony Merry, His Britannic Majesty's Minister Plenipotentiary in Paris, until May 25th, 1802 and can have lost no time in returning to his home-town of Chambéry.

At the end of September he bought the château of Buisson Rond. Just outside the town, it stands back only a hundred yards or so from the old road to Grenoble. It is a typical late seventeenth century château approached by a broad double avenue of magnificent old plane-trees which meet overhead. At the end, after crossing a bridge, one mounts by a double carriage-sweep to the terrace on which the house is built. The façade is imposing, the entrance hall is huge; on either side of it broad marble steps turn upwards to the impressive reception rooms on the first floor, with ceilings so lofty that de Boigne could easily have supposed himself back in India. On the debit side, there are virtually no bedrooms and though well-adapted for entertaining, Buisson Rond is cold and austere—not a house in which a man should spend the evening of his days alone. But de Boigne could at least look up to the snowy mountains of Savoy and take comfort from them. (It is to his credit, that having paid the full value of the property to those who had acquired it from the Government when the original owner, the émigré Count d'Arvillard, was proscribed and his possessions forfeited, he

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voluntarily gave d'Arvillard's children a substantial addition to the purchase price.)

* * *

After more than thirty years he had come home. But certain chickens were also coming home to roost, or threatening to.

In May, 1803, when hostilities were resumed between England and France, de Boigne was living in a house in the Place Vendôme, which he had taken until Buisson Rond should be made habitable. He had arrived in Paris as "the English General Boyne," with a British passport, though he had also contrived to collect a French one in Mayence, in favour of "le citoyen Benoît le Borgne de Boigne, Général."

On July 8th, 1803, Lord Wellesley, Governor-General of India, wrote to General Lake: "*M. de Boigne, Sindhia's late General, is now the chief confidant of Bonaparte. He is constantly at St. Cloud. I leave you to judge why and wherefore.*" In 1804 was published in London an anonymous pamphlet, written, it is to be supposed, by one of Wellesley's entourage in which the same charge is elaborated. It was stated that Napoleon had made de Boigne a Privy Counsellor.

There was no truth in the charge. De Boigne never went to Court at St. Cloud and never met Napoleon. But the very fact that he was living in Paris seemed to give substance to it. He had, however, already taken steps to allay any suspicions that might arise or be fostered in Government circles in England. On April 24th, just before war broke out, Richard Johnson wrote from London thanking him for a letter "*which will enable me to clear up at once and I trust for ever, all misconception about your conduct and sentiments. I shall*

immediately get a meeting with a very intimate friend of mine, high in office, which I am confident will set everything right, to your perfect satisfaction—and all the better for the explanation."

The "intimate friend," whoever he was, must indeed have been influential for it does not appear that any official notice was taken of Lord Wellesley's accusation or of the pamphlet. De Boigne was able to live in France throughout the Napoleonic wars without ever being regarded as an enemy of England. He was also able to control ample funds in both countries. The English authorities, then, had no doubt where his sympathies lay.

The French were more dangerous. As a reprisal by Napoleon for the arrest of Frenchmen before the actual outbreak of war, British subjects who had held commissions in the British forces were promptly interned, among them, for a time, Count Daniel O'Connell, who happened to be in Paris. His friend de Boigne, who was, or until a few months before, had been a British subject,¹ as a former officer in the army of the East India Company, had served under the British flag. Yet he was not interned. Moreover, in 1806, after Napoleon had been Emperor for two years, he was, at the instance of General Junot, Military Governor of Paris, given a pass permitting him to move about freely in the sub-division Seine-et-Oise and to retain his two English men-servants. The *laissez-passer* says: "*Attendu qu'il ne peut être regardé comme Anglais*"—"seeing that he cannot be regarded as English." It proves that he cannot have taken French nationality, since as a Frenchman he would not have needed it. Very possibly he produced the letters of appointment and other documents received from

¹ According to George III's warrant, his naturalisation was only valid so long as he and his family lived in England or a British possession.

Sindhia, of which a large number exists at Buisson Rond. With Sindhia's seal they are imposing; they had the additional advantage of being unintelligible unless specially translated.

Did he, then, succeed in concealing from Fouché, Napoleon's brutal, suspicious and vigilant Minister of Police, not only his pro-British sentiments but even the fact that he had so recently sworn allegiance to King George III? It would seem so. For already, during the summer of 1803, he had received an offer which could hardly have been made to him had either his real feelings or his former status been known.

It was contained in a letter written to him by Napoleon in his own hand. De Boigne was offered the command of a combined Franco-Russian force which should invade India from Russia by the overland route. The letter has disappeared¹ but it is known that such an expedition had been suggested to Napoleon by the Prince of Nassau-Siegen, diplomatic courier between the Czar Alexander I and Talleyrand, and that Napoleon had written to the Czar, approving the proposal.

Nothing could have been more unwelcome. Since de Boigne's letter of refusal cannot be traced, he presumably pleaded his age and ill-health. But how did this phantom from his almost forgotten past come up to haunt him? The evidence that he may have been invited, thanks to Nassau-Siegen, to reap the fruit of what he himself had sown is circumstantial, complicated and inconclusive. I have, therefore, relegated it to an appendix. The reader,

¹ There is one witness, living at Nogent-sur-Marne and now over eighty, who has seen the letter. It was shown to him in July, 1914, by a great-grandson of de Boigne from whom he had bought a property.

if he is interested, must decide for himself whether so many coincidences occurred by chance.

Ninety years later, in 1892, Herbert Compton¹ was anxious to find out whether there was any truth in the accusations made by Wellesley and in the anonymous pamphlet. De Boigne's grandson, Count Ernest de Boigne, was able to assure him that de Boigne had had no dealings with Napoleon and was "innocent of the hostility to the English with which he had been charged." He did not mention Napoleon's letter. Nor did he mention that in 1802 de Boigne was a subject of King George III. The omission was perhaps natural. In 1892 Clemenceau, violently attacked over the Panama scandal, was being openly accused by his enemies of being not only an Anglophile but a British agent. No one would wish his grandfather to be tarred with that brush at that moment.

When, however, Count Ernest de Boigne went on to say that "during the whole of the reign of Bonaparte, the General led a perfectly secluded life," by implication at Buisson Rond, he carried his discretion a little beyond *suppressio veri*. De Boigne did not, in fact, retire at once to Buisson Rond, nor did he lead a perfectly secluded life during the whole of the reign of Bonaparte.² In 1804 he bought the château of Beauregard, a charming house and a considerable estate some four miles out of Paris. There, being still a glutton for punishment, he begged Adèle to join him. Indeed she says that he invited her repeatedly, until at last she agreed.

"I felt that I was in a false position. The importance of the quarrels which had made my life unbearable was now

¹ Author of *European Military Adventurers in Hindustan*. ² Adèle's *Memoirs* would have disproved the statement but they were not published until 1907.

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diminished by distance and I had no sufficient means to advance for refusing to obey the orders which he had the right to issue . . . My parents promised to come and see me if I could secure the erasure of their names (from the list of émigrés) *and this eventually decided my action.*" That and perhaps the fact that the "provider" was now in France. The negotiations had evidently been going on for some time for Richard Johnson writes, in his letter of April, 1803, "I feel truly happy at the idea of your being soon again joined by your amiable lady and I heartily pray you may never separate again." The renewal of war doubtless interrupted them.

Adèle set sail in September, 1804, from Gravesend in a Dutch vessel. Provided that the captain gave his port of departure as "Grand Emden," seafaring slang for London, it was not very difficult to reach the Continent from beleaguered England. The administration of Holland was in French hands and because a young Frenchman at The Hague, who claimed to be her cousin (she must have had hundreds), tried to exploit the relationship, she concluded that all the young men of revolutionary France were "familiar, presuming, ridiculous and impertinent. . . ."

"As for myself, I am not quite certain what I was, *English, I believe*, but certainly not French." She must, then, surely have learnt something about de Boigne's nationality for she was French by birth and in the marriage certificate he was described simply as "formerly of Chambéry in Savoy."

De Boigne had miscalculated her time of arrival and was in Savoy when she reached Beauregard and "installed myself mistress of this beautiful spot." "I took possession

with much sorrow, to which I could give way as I pleased, on November 2nd, 1804, All Souls' Day, in a cold and penetrating fog, which made it impossible to see three feet beyond one's eyes." Having commented on the absence of bells, which had been condemned as undemocratic during the revolution and which de Boigne had naturally "not thought of having put in," perhaps because they are also resented by servants in India, who prefer to be shouted for, she continues: "I felt a weariness and desolation which froze me to the soul and I could not have thought myself in a wilder country had I been on the banks of the Columbia . . . My unfortunate brain, twenty years of age, was then for the first time left to its own resources and was entirely bewildered by the multitude of impressions which I received. . . ."

Adèle expatiates on her own weariness and desolation of spirit but she does not mention a sorrow which had fallen upon Beauregard about a month before she installed herself as its mistress. Of that we learn from a letter which de Boigne either copied or did not send, for it is in his uniform-case at Chambéry. Writing on January 7th, 1805, from 5 Place Vendôme to a M. de Verneilh, in the Dordogne, he tells a sad story:

"I had at school in London a daughter, fifteen years old, as pretty as she was intelligent. For two years I had wanted to have her with me and with this object I asked my friends in England to send her to me. They agreed at last to my request and at the beginning of September sent her off via Holland to join me. She had to wait for passports and was well looked after by a respectable family. But, falling ill in Brussels, she

arrived at Beauregard only to take to her bed and to die in my arms twelve days later.

"After the career I have followed I know the vicissitudes of human life and could have accepted my loss had I not had to reproach myself for the child's death, seeing that she would still be alive had I thought of her happiness rather than of my own and left her to finish her education in England. But her presence was needed for a plan of life that I had made¹ and the poor child has been the victim of it. She is happy but there will be no more happiness for me."

Poor little Ann, once "Bunoo". Filed under "Miss Ann," de Boigne preserved a single letter from her, in beautiful copper-plate writing, saying that she is perfectly well and very happy with Mrs. Barker at Northend, Hammer-smith, and that nothing could make her happier except to have news of him . . . And she is, with the most tender affection, his obedient daughter.

Filed also is the letter which H  l  ne wrote to de Boigne when she heard of her daughter's death. The handwriting is not as elegant as that of Ann (who wrote in French), but it is perfectly legible and shows that though she had become, in her exile, a practising and even a fervent Christian, she had remained very much a woman, with no very Christian feelings about her supplanter.

"I don't know what to write upon my misfortune," she says. "I think you ought to give thanks to God for

¹ Whatever the plan was, it included H  l  ne, for Richard Johnson had written in October, 1803, that "no passport has yet been obtained for Mrs. Bennet and the child, nor do I believe that any can be had just now. The only mode would be a passage by Hamburg, which would be very tedious and inconvenient." Presumably she was to look after Ann, perhaps in Chamb  ry.

having many relations, friends and acquaintances where poor I had but very few or next to none." De Boigne is then advised to think of Job's troubles and to remember that we brought nothing into the world and can take nothing out.

"But let me advise you to leave off those ideas that you have been the cause of the poor dear child's death. No, not you but *someone else* . . . who tried to deprive the poor innocents of their lives. I dare say you did love her as much as I did; your intention was good, I don't doubt it. She is happy, an angel in heaven who prays for us . . . but you have another child to take care of . . . try to take care of your health for poor Charles's sake. What will become of him if anything happens to you? . . . He deserves all your and my blessing. All his masters are pleased with his learning. He is a very good boy and a very dutiful child. He is tall, better than five feet. . . .

"I see by your letter that you have provided for Charles and also for me. As to myself, I don't much care, but only for Charles. How easy one may wrong him out of his rights by destroying the papers. . . . Do what you please, only I sincerely hope you will act like a father towards your son . . . you may have many more but you are not sure that they are yours . . . God grant you long life to see Charles grow up a man . . . I sincerely wish you will send me all my child's things. . . ."

Poor Hélène, too, for she, after all, was only thirty-four.

As for Adèle, all she has to say is that "at the end of December we set up house in Paris, where I spent the three most wearisome months of my life. Parisian society is so exclusive that there is no place for a newcomer, who is

completely isolated until he or she has formed a circle apart. Moreover, my fear of scenes, which M. de Boigne would begin upon any or no occasion, obliged me to a retirement of life which was not conducive to social intercourse."

Did de Boigne really make these repeated scenes within three months of Ann's death? It is not easy to believe that he would have done so had Adèle showed him even a vestige of sympathy—or, indeed, that he did so at all, for Adèle is the only authority for them. General Thiebault, a contemporary, says in his *Memoirs* that both she and her mother were consistently and contemptuously rude to him in public. But General Thiebault so detested Adèle that he, like his *bête blonde*, is not an impartial witness.

Adèle did not remain in retirement for long. She was still, as she said, bound by a thousand ties to the *ancien régime* and there were plenty of its representatives in Paris. Her *Memoirs* are filled with the names of Princesses and Duchesses of the old aristocracy who despised and laughed at the new. She admits that "although we were extremely insolent, we were by no means brave," as, for example, when Fouché, who had his spies everywhere, commented on the rudeness of the Princesse de la Tremouille to the Count d'Aubusson, who had just accepted the appointment of Chamberlain to the Emperor.¹

Adèle's education in England had, however, given her liberal political ideas and her father, who had been largely responsible for it, was, despite or perhaps because of his service at the French Court, a liberal-minded man. Her

She got no change out of d'Aubusson, who had known her "from way back," even, as he said, "to the time when I was obliged to turn you out of the barracks for attempting to seduce the soldiers of my regiment."

mother, on the other hand, had wept with vexation at her revolutionary principles and had accused her of turning her brother Rainulphe's head in favour of Bonaparte—the truth being that life in émigré society in London and a study of the Princes at close quarters was calculated to make any intelligent person, and no one can say that Adèle was not intelligent, at least a theoretical Bonapartist, if only to annoy mother.

In 1805, her uncle, the Bishop of Cominges, having secured the erasure of her father's name from the list of émigrés, he, her mother and brother Rainulphe came over from England to take up their quarters in "my" house in Paris and in "my" château at Beauregard.

"In the early days of the Empire, opposition society in Paris was very pleasant. As soon as I was initiated and had formed a circle of my own, I found life very delightful." Having made the acquaintance of Madame Récamier, then at the height of her beauty, wealth and wit, and been deeply attracted by her, she was also able to get a footing both in intellectual circles and in the Imperial camp, where she met "a large number of specimens of the new Empire, Murat, Eugène, Beauharnais the Marshals, etc., as well as a great number of the old nobility, of returned émigrés, high financial authorities and many foreigners." Desertions from "opposition" society were, in fact, becoming frequent and before long the great majority of the nobility, with the exception of extreme "die-hards," attached themselves to the Empire.

Though a condescension, it was not, therefore, a social blunder or a betrayal of her class for Adèle to attend a grand ball given at the Tuileries by Napoleon. Naturally she thought that he "looked frightful, like a mock king," in his white satin knee-breeches and gold-embroidered coat

of red velvet, glittering with diamond orders and stars, but "notwithstanding my prejudices I was never able to suppress my sincere admiration for the First Consul . . . Had I lived in another atmosphere, I should, I believe, have been really enthusiastic about him."

On this occasion he was particularly genial and she records their conversation. "*He asked my name, which I told him. 'Your husband employs much labour at Beauregard. I am grateful to him. He has been in the English army?' I thought it shorter to answer 'Yes' but he continued: 'That is to say, not entirely. He is a Savoyard, is he not?' 'Yes, Sire.' 'But you are French, entirely French, and we therefore claim you, for you are not one of those rights easily surrendered.' I bowed . . . 'You have no children? I know that is not your fault but you should make better arrangements. Believe me, I am giving you good advice.' I remained stupefied. . . .*"

De Boigne was evidently not detailed to accompany Adèle to the ball. Indeed, except for the remark that: "Difficult as I find the fact to understand, he was no revolutionary and upon this one subject of politics we were almost in entire agreement," she makes so little mention of him that he might have spent all his time from 1805 onwards in seclusion at Chambéry, as his grandson implied. This, however, was not the case, for he himself writes:

"Here I am, once again launched into the Brouhaha of a tumultuous life—boxes at the Opera, boxes at the Théâtre Français, dinners, suppers, etc., etc. It all seems strange to me and I don't know how I shall be able to put up with it. It won't be easy but to preserve peace in the family I must submit and contribute as much as I can.

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It could all become a pleasure if only I could expect a little gratitude in return . . . I won't speak about Buisson Rond except to say that in a few years it will be a charming place to live in. But I must not think about it for Madame de Boigne loves the pleasures of the capital too much even to think of settling there. So all the money I have spent on it is wasted . . . I am not happy."

Having Adèle, as the French say, under his skin, he hung on when surely even he must have realised that no miracle was likely to change her feelings towards him. Gradually, however, his visits to Chambéry grew more and more frequent. "At first," says Adèle, "he spent some weeks every summer there, but these soon became months. Finally, attracted by the vast importance which his unequalled wealth gave him in his own country, he settled there definitely and became the benefactor of the place. Beauregard, then too large a house for the income which he had left me, was put up for sale and was bought by the Prince Aldobrandini Borghese . . . This removal did not take place until 1812."

De Boigne, in fact, began his retreat from Paris in the same month, October, as Napoleon began his from Moscow. To us, who have all lived through at least one world war, it will seem no more than mildly ironical that it was his matrimonial disaster rather than the fate of Europe which occupied his mind. The parting, though it was not to prove final, was far from friendly. There is on record a letter from Adèle which suggests that by now the ill-humour and resentment were by no means all on one side.

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"You always reply to me with such harshness, my dear friend," she writes, "every time I speak to you of myself, and this harshness is so painful to me, that, although we are under the same roof, I prefer to write to you . . . You have agreed to some of my requests, while you have refused others. I will not speak of this again. I know perfectly well that I have no other claims except those of virtue and delicacy.

"To-day I see preparations for your departure, and although I do not concur with the amiable desire you have expressed never to see me again, yet I feel that just now my presence at Buisson Rond would be as embarrassing for you as it would be for me. I cannot therefore fix a limit for this absence, which I shall not fail to curtail as soon as you express the faintest desire on the subject. . . ."

(There follows a long passage which deals entirely with finance and explains that, having to keep up two houses, Adèle, though she is to have her £2500 a year and the income from the sale of Beauregard, will only just be able to manage. She does not see how she has deserved less than he fixed himself, particularly as his financial position has improved, with the sale of Beauregard and the rise in the rate of exchange.)

"However, my dear friend, I repeat that I submit to your pleasure. All I wish to avoid is a painful discussion . . . Good-night, dear General! You imagine that you are surrounded by people who wish you well much more than I do, and you are greatly mistaken. Some day, and soon, perhaps, those persons will show you what they are worth, and then, as always, you will come back to and

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judge with less injustice the woman who is and will always be your most faithful and your best friend."

A creditable letter, even a sympathetic one, and not without a touch of humour. Could Adèle be judged by it alone, there might be more to be said for her. It is not, however, in what she wrote to de Boigne when he was alive and she was bent on obtaining from him as much money as possible that her nature is revealed, but in what she wrote about him after she had obtained it and he was long since dead.

Buisson Rond

HAD IT been possible, had war between England and France not intervened, it might well have been to India and not to Chambéry that de Boigne would have withdrawn.

As soon as it was known that he had recovered his health, Daulat Rao Sindhia, the successor to his old master, implored him to come back. "Repair with all possible speed to the Presence," he wrote. "The proper management of many weighty affairs is totally suspended and waits upon your wise counsel and advice . . . [You are] the ancient pillar of this Government, the only real strength of our arm."

Captain Dugeon, his fellow Savoyard, was equally insistent. "It seems twenty years since you left," he wrote, "and you are awaited here like the Messiah . . . You would be the master of everything if you returned . . . The troops never mention any other name but yours . . . Come in a balloon if that will bring you here faster!"

Again Dugeon wrote: "They know that they will never find another de Boigne." Perron, meanwhile, as de Boigne's successor, enjoys "the power of a King of Prussia, the riches of a Croesus . . . He is courted by all the Rajas and great men, even the Prince himself. Money falls upon him day

and night like rain . . . Good God, if only you were here, what an immense fortune you would leave to your son!"

But when, in the society of two Dukes, Adèle had temporarily sheathed her claws and there seemed some hope for his marriage, de Boigne would not go without her and she would not go. By the time that he realised that his marriage was a wreck, he was too tired and it was too late. In the "magnificent solitude" of Government House, Calcutta, "stalking about like a Royal Tiger," was a new Governor-General, whose policy was to expel the French from the service of Sindhia and, ultimately, to destroy the power of the Mahrattas.

Had de Boigne been on the spot and able to reveal that he was a British subject, whose sympathies were with England and not with France, he might have been able to change the course of history. He would have found an ally in Arthur Wellesley who, unlike his elder brother, was at first in favour of preserving the Mahratta power, to counteract that of the Nizam of Hyderabad and of the ruler of Kabul. "The more I see of the Mahrattas," he wrote, "the more convinced I am that they never could have an alliance with the French. . . ."

Perron, however, played directly into the hands of the Governor-General. Unlike de Boigne, he was a Frenchman and his heart was stirred by the triumphs of the Republican armies. There is no evidence that he had all along been intriguing with the French, as was supposed in Calcutta, but the French were certainly anxious to intrigue with him and with his master. When British officers were summoned by the Governor-General's proclamation to leave Sindhia's service, he replaced them with French and rascally French at that.

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Lord Wellesley could write with some justice to the Secretary of State for War that: "M. Perron has formed his territory into an independent State . . . He dictates with the authority of a sovereign State of a superior rank and with the vigour of efficient military power . . . He has openly disobeyed or systematically evaded the orders of Sindhia . . . He is in possession of the person of the unfortunate Emperor, Shah Alam . . . An independent French State [has been founded] on the most vulnerable part of the Company's frontier . . . *The safety of the British dominions requires the reduction of M. Perron's military resources and power. . . .*"

When, by their own folly, the Mahrattas were manœuvred into war, in September, 1803, Perron, knowing himself to be distrusted by his master and about to be superseded, thought only of saving his fortune. Making only a token resistance to General Lake outside Aligarh, he galloped off the field, crying to James Skinner¹: "It is all over. Do not ruin yourself. Go over to the British!" Then he put his own advice into practice. Having evaded assassination and arrest, he reached General Lake. As the British were anxious to see the last of him, he was allowed, at the beginning of 1806, to sail for Europe, like de Boigne in a Danish ship and, like de Boigne, with a son and daughter. He also took what he called "the débris" of his fortune. With what he had already remitted, it amounted to considerably more than £750,000. He left perhaps as much behind. The brevet appointing "Citizen Perron" a Divisional General in the armies of the French Republic never reached him, for the French officers bearing it (and

¹ Later Lt.-Col. James Skinner, C.B., founder and commander of Skinner's Horse.

a medallion of the First Consul), were captured between Bombay and Goa.

* * *

There was nothing heroic about the downfall of Perron in India though it is fair to him to say that he made a last-minute attempt to avert war and refused to leave until he had handed over his command. The only heroism on Sindhia's side was displayed by de Boigne's brigades who, deserted by Perron and most of their European officers, fought as Indian troops have seldom fought before but as many of us, with profound admiration, have seen them fight since.

Years previously there had been those who predicted that the very innovation of training the Mahrattas on European lines would prove their downfall in the end. In open durbar a Mahratta cavalry commander replied to Daulat Rao Sindhia when he asked: "Who is there dare oppose me so long as I have my infantry and guns?" with the words: "Beware, it is those very infantry and guns who will be your ruin!" Arthur Wellesley himself wrote, after this campaign:

"Sindhia's armies had actually been brought to a very favourable state of discipline and his power had become formidable by the exertions of the European officers in his service; but I think it is much to be doubted whether his power, or rather that of the Mahratta nation, would not have been more formidable, at least to the British Government, if they had never had a European as an infantry soldier in their service, and had carried on

their operations in the manner of the original Mahrattas, only by cavalry."

"*At least to the British Government :*" de Boigne would have been the first to agree with him. He had formed and trained his new model army (which incidentally contained only a small minority of Mahrattas) on the express understanding that it would never be employed against regular British troops; in battle against other Indian troops it was invincible and with it he had made Mahadaji Sindhia the ruler of northern India.

Yet even so he could take a melancholy pride in how his battalions behaved even against British troops, led by such outstanding soldiers as Major-General Sir Arthur Wellesley and General Lake, in the two great battles of Assaye (September 23rd, 1803) and Laswari (November 1st). The battles need not be described: it is sufficient to quote the two victorious commanders. Wrote Wellesley:

"The battle was the most severe I have ever fought in India. Sindhia's infantry behaved well. They were driven from their guns only by the bayonet and some of their corps retreated in great order and formed again."

Wellesley had 1566 casualties, of whom 600 were Europeans, or more than a third of the total number engaged. Such a percentage of loss had never previously been recorded in any general action since the establishment of British power in India.

Of Laswari, Lake wrote from the battlefield itself to the Governor-General, on the day following the battle:

"All the sepoys of the enemy behaved exceedingly well, and if they had been commanded by French officers,

the affair would, I fear, have been extremely doubtful. I was never in so severe a business in my life and pray God I may never be in such a situation again. Their army is better appointed than ours, no expense is spared whatever and they have three times the number of men to a gun we have . . . *These fellows fought like devils, or rather heroes, and had we not made a disposition for attack in a style that we should have done against the most formidable army we could have been opposed to, I verily believe, from the position they had taken, we might have failed.*"

It is the tragic side of the soldier's trade that it is by the often fruitless self-sacrifice of nameless men that his work is crowned.

* * *

"Once in the snowy mountains of Savoy," de Boigne had written to Palmer, "I shall not trouble myself much of how things are going on Ganges side."

His adventures and achievements in India were now no more than a memory. He was sixty-one. Having enabled Adèle to acquire a little manor in the village of Chatenay, near Sceaux, with literary associations since it was in this house that Voltaire was born, he had parted from her in the belief—and hope, or so he said—that it was for ever. What was he to do with the rest of his life amongst his snowy mountains?

It was natural that his thoughts should turn to his son. Though things might have been different had he had a second family by Adèle, he had never forgotten his first. "My love to the children," he wrote to Hélène just before leaving England, "be careful to keep them in remembrance

of their father. I have a right also in their love and affections. I would be jealous and excessively mortified was you to possess them alone and myself nothing. You see that I take care of my due!"

It is certain that he saw Charles before he left England and he instructed H  l  ne "in all cases of emergencies both in regard of you and the children, apply to Mr. Angelo, who has always been one of your best friends and best wishers, as he ever was to me. Believe me, he will always be ready to help you."

The self-possessed little boy whom Thomas Twining had seen sitting on de Boigne's left in durbar, while visiting nobles laid tribute of gold mohurs before him, had been baptised Charles Alexander Bennet de Boigne in London on October 22nd, 1799. He was then, according to the r  gister, nine years old. His godfather was the Marquis d'Osmond, himself, his godmother Mary Angelo, wife of Anthony Angelo. If, then, his existence was concealed from Ad  le at the time of de Boigne's proposal, it was soon disclosed to d'Osmond and condoned by him.

Thanks to his mother and sister, to Angelo and to Angelo's flock of sons, Charles did not have an unhappy childhood. He missed his father and found it hard to understand that he could not expect letters regularly from France in time of war. "I cannot help entertaining a disagreeable apprehension that I have incurred your displeasure . . ." he wrote when there had been a long silence. A letter was sufficient to "dismiss those doubts and fears which at present perplex and render me unhappy" and de Boigne replied when he could and gave his son long-range advice.

Charles had been sent to school at St. Edmund's College, near Ware, in Hertfordshire, in 1801 and remained there

until 1810. John Angelo joined the same term and was followed by six more Angelos at short intervals. In February, 1807, we find Charles writing: "I pursue my studies, I hope with some degree of success, and apply myself particularly to those branches of training which you have recommended and which no doubt will be the most conducive to my future welfare . . . I feel exceedingly obliged by your leaving this choice of a state of life to myself and I will ponder the subject . . . If I am advised, guided and directed by you I cannot err."

As for his mother, "*I am particularly attentive to what you direct concerning the best of mothers. I love, respect and esteem her . . .*" And Hélène writes to him at school: "Let me beg you to pay attention to your learning and be careful of your health . . . I will send you a silk handkerchief; it is a very good one. I remain, my dear Charles, your most affectionate, tender Mother."

Two years later, in 1809, Charles thinks he would like to be either a soldier or a statesman but will do whatever his father decides. "It is now eight long years, my ever-honoured father, since I have seen you and you may imagine with what impatience I long to see you again; the time drags heavily along when I am debarred from your presence. . . ." The one favour he has to ask is that he may come over to France when he has finished his studies. (In June, 1811, having revised his ideas about his career, he was admitted to Lincoln's Inn.)

For the moment, war made a re-union impossible. It did not, however, prevent a fleeting visit from Adèle. She had not concurred with "your amiable desire never to see me again" and there was some foundation for her doubtless infuriating prophecy that "as always, you will come back."

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At any rate, a bedroom, the present library, was kept in readiness for her at Buisson Rond. If he would not go to her, she was free to come to him.

When next she did so, though only for dinner, the attraction was not so much her husband at Chambéry as her friend, Madame Récamier, close by at Aix-les-Bains; and with her the redoubtable Madame de Stael. It was convenient to have a château to which to invite them. At short notice, de Boigne obediently arranged a dinner-party for thirty. Since he had been appointed by the Imperial Government President of the Council-General of the Department of Mont-Blanc, it included, besides Madame Récamier, Madame de Stael and the latter's *cher ami*, Benjamin Constant, a number of the local notables. Among them was the *Préfet*, civil administrator of the Department. Across the table, Madame de Stael asked him what had become of a sub-*préfet* whom she had known. The *Préfet* answered that he was now a *préfet* and much respected. "I am very glad to hear it," replied Madame de Stael, "he was a good fellow. In any case," she added carelessly, "I have generally found that class of servant very decent."

Madame de Stael was not aware that she had said anything which might give offence. She was also unaware that the *Préfet* had in his pocket an order that she should be sent back under police escort to Coppet, whither she had been banished by her enemy, Napoleon. The *Préfet*, himself an intellectual, did not enlighten her.¹

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¹ After meeting her, Schiller said that he felt as though he was recovering from a severe illness. Goethe wrote that she inquired into feelings "which a man generally reserves for private intercourse between himself and his God."

Came the abdication of the Emperor on April 20th, 1814. While de Boigne remained secluded at Chambéry, Adèle, in Paris, saw the entry of the Allied troops and Cossacks encamped in the Champs Elysées. She went to the Opera and applauded the Emperor Alexander of Russia and the King of Prussia. She saw the triumphant entry of "Monsieur," Louis XVIII's brother, the Comte d'Artois, who afterwards became for a brief space King Charles X of France. She saw the entry of King Louis XVIII himself, returned from exile in England, was received by him with special kindness and called "my little Adèle." She heard the King's speech when the Charter was promulgated. She lived in the midst of great events.

Then her father, having refused the Ambassadorship in Vienna, was prevailed upon by Talleyrand, a boyhood friend, to accept that of Turin. In October, 1814, Adèle and her mother accompanied him there, to find King Victor Emmanuel I determined to put the clock back to exactly where it stood when the French occupied his country. Even the French Embassy under the Marquis d'Osmond, was regarded as the centre of subversive wickedness because King Louis XVIII had granted his own subjects a Charter and the Ambassador approved the step.

After the excitements of Paris Adèle found the Court of Turin "the gloomiest and most wearisome place of residence in the whole universe." It was some consolation to know that "Monsieur" himself, the King's brother, making a tour of the south, had lodged at Chambéry with de Boigne, "who showed him great kindness." This was one of the few words of praise her husband ever earned from Adèle. When the Prince, on leaving, gave him six Crosses of Honour to distribute in the town, she was naïvely surprised

to learn that "M. de Boigne made no bad choice, *though the responsibility was entirely his own.*"

Then came the sudden reappearance of Napoleon from Elba and the eruption of the Hundred Days. When Waterloo was lost and won, Adèle set out for Paris, spending some time at Chambéry, where she observed that, while the old nobility earnestly desired the restoration of the dynasty of Savoy, the middle and commercial classes preferred to remain French.

De Boigne, who had no wish to be French, was perforce on the side of the nobility and was soon to be ennobled himself. It must have been due to Adèle that he was made a *Maréchal de Camp* by Louis XVIII in October, 1814, a Chevalier of the military order of St. Louis in December, a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour in January. It was because of his good works in Savoy and his "attachment to Our Person" that King Victor Emmanuel conferred on him the hereditary title of "Count" in 1816. But her father had been Ambassador in Turin and the King of Sardinia was Louis XVIII's brother-in-law, so it may be assumed that Adèle had a hand in this also. At any rate, though she never ceased to despise her husband's bourgeois birth and to ridicule the pretensions of newly-created aristocrats, she did not hesitate to take his title and to become "Madame la Comtesse de Boigne."

Just a week before the Battle of Waterloo, M. Charles Benoît de Boigne, "*Gentilhomme Anglais*," having disembarked at Boulogne, was given a French passport by the mayor of that town and made his way as soon as he could to Chambéry, passing through the disbanded Army of the Loire, as did Adèle in the opposite direction, and doubtless admiring, as she did, its unbroken discipline in

defeat. His father had not seen him for thirteen years and he was now a young man—a personable young English gentleman of twenty-two. Clearly he had justified all his mother's hopes for him, for de Boigne, immediately after he had been ennobled by the King of Sardinia, set about arranging for Charles to succeed him.

There were certain formalities which necessitated an immensely long petition. Charles had to be legitimised and he could not remain a British subject. (Neither in the patents of nobility nor in the petition was there any mention of the fact that his father had ever been one.) De Boigne had to show that Adèle had been amply provided for; that he had no children by her and did not now expect to have any; that, his parents being dead, no member of his own family would be prejudiced by making his son his heir.

It was the sort of prolix document which he enjoyed drafting in his neat handwriting. Of Hélène, "Persian by origin and daughter of a Colonel of Cavalry in the service of the Emperor of the Moguls, Shah Alam," he said only that both she and he had been free when Charles was born, that their association had hurt no one and that she had since embraced the Catholic faith and, like her children, been baptised in London. The petition was accepted in Chambéry on September 29th, 1816 and sent for ratification to the Senate in Turin, which approved it without delay.

One of de Boigne's professed objects in seeking to settle his son in the dominions of the King of Sardinia was, so ran the petition, to increase the number of the King's subjects. That object was speedily achieved. On November 29th of this same year, Charles married at Chambéry a charming and well-born girl, Marie-Louise Césarine Violet de

Montbel, sixteen years old, and they proceeded in due course to have thirteen children.

* * *

Meanwhile Talleyrand had procured for the Marquis d'Osmond the appointment of Ambassador in London. Father and mother moved there in January, 1816. On a shining Sunday in May, Adèle followed them, driving from Dover "in a state of continual delight" and arriving just in time to be taken to a concert at Carlton House, where her parents were dining, and to be presented to the Queen.

Adèle was now thirty-five and still at the height of her beauty. What was more important for posterity, her powers of observation were at their most acute. Though she professed to find a diplomatic career, even at the ambassadorial level, "detestable—one of the least agreeable careers that a man can pursue," she was much too intelligent and much too malicious to miss anything that went on around her.

This in spite of the fact that she "hardly ever left the interior of the Embassy, to which we had eventually attracted some intimate friends, except to visit some colleagues of the diplomatic body or to go to the house of ministers and to the Court when my presence was indispensable." She did not include among her duties her frequent visits to the Duc d'Orléans and his family at Twickenham, for these she genuinely enjoyed. They did not make either her or her father more popular in Paris, where the Orléans family were deeply distrusted by the King and those who surrounded him.

Adèle made another friend in an unlikely quarter. Six months after his marriage, Charles had returned to England

to see his mother and to transact some business for his father. De Boigne gave him letters to the Marquis d'Osmond and to Adèle and advised him to deliver them in person. "It may happen your being well received by them," he wrote, not very confidently. "If I am mistaken, no matter for it!"

Charles, who was devoted to his mother, cannot have gone to pay his call at the French Embassy with any confidence or pleasure. The Marquis d'Osmond, a soldier, a gentleman and his godfather, would presumably at least be civil. But what about Adèle, who had supplanted his mother and made his father miserable for so many years? How would she receive him?

In the event, it was Adèle who provided the surprise. Having inspected her stepson, approved of him and approved also of his eminently suitable marriage (the Baron de Montbel, his father-in-law, was later to hold office in the Polignac Ministry), she took a liking to Charles which developed, on her side at any rate, into a lifelong attachment. She was delighted to entertain his young wife in Paris; she showed herself much more cordial to him than ever she had been to his father; she was content to leave her business affairs in his hands. Thirty years later we find her writing him affectionate letters and she seems to have become as fond of him as she was capable of being of anyone not by birth an Osmond.

Her sojourn in England was relieved by frequent visits to Paris. There, with a foot in both camps, she shrewdly observed the political scene and deplored the foolish animosity of the King and his Court to her friends at Twickenham. It was on one of these visits, in February, 1818, that Adèle was shipwrecked off Calais. The British

packet went aground on a sandspit a mile or more from the coast. She was full of passengers. There was only one boat. A heavy sea was running. Heavy snow was falling. Night was coming on. The vessel was likely to break up or to be submerged. It was a situation of real danger. Adèle, however, surrendering her claim as an Ambassador's daughter, insisted that women with young children be taken ashore before her. The captain congratulated her on the example she had set; she had saved the situation, he said, by averting panic. The King and his brother congratulated her when she went to Court. "I must tell you that I nearly became a widower," wrote de Boigne to Perron, recounting the incident. "My wife writes to me that the experience and the fear have done her good. . . ."

In 1819 the Marquis d'Osmond resigned his post as Ambassador. Adèle, back in England again, hurried to Paris to find a house for the family. She seized the opportunity to take the waters at Aix-les-Bains and to pay a visit to her husband, whom she had not seen for three years. Then, having acquired a house in the Rue Bourbon, she settled down with her parents to consolidate her place in the social and literary life of Paris.

XXI

Perron and de Boigne

IT WAS a queer psychological quirk that made Adèle take so sudden but lasting a fancy to young Charles de Boigne. It seems almost equally strange that, immediately upon Perron's return to France, de Boigne should have resumed his friendship with him, on even more cordial terms than when they had soldiered together in India. For it was Perron's disobedience to his parting orders which had brought ruin to the Mahrattas. In politics they were far from seeing eye to eye. Moreover, de Boigne had always regarded Perron as a subordinate. Nevertheless, this friendship, founded on memories, was one of the major consolations of his old age.

Even before leaving India, Perron had sent a large sum of money to his brother for the purchase of a country property, a fine house with woods and plenty of land. It must be, he insisted, "a little earthly paradise." His brother did well, for so it is, Le Fresne, as beautiful an eighteenth century château in as enchanting surroundings as any soldier could dream of for retirement.¹ Perron was born in 1753 at Luceau, only a few miles away.

¹ The nearest small town is Montoire (Cher-et-Loir), whose peaceful sleep has been disturbed only once in the last century, when Hitler and Pétain had their meeting there.

A year after his arrival, undeterred by the unfortunate experience of de Boigne, which he knew all about from the victim (or culprit) before he left India, he married Anne-Josephine de Trochet, the daughter of a noble family impoverished by the Revolution. Had she been as young or as difficult as Adèle this marriage also would doubtless have turned out disastrously, for Perron was fifty-four. She was, however, twenty-one and seems to have been a gentle and domesticated girl, while Perron's portrait shows that he was no sentimentalist.

Though fond of children, he did not rate little girls very highly. When Anne presented him with a second daughter within two years of marriage, he wrote to de Boigne: "Always girls! If they had been boys, at least I might have hoped to see them cover themselves with glory in the service of their country. But girls, what are they good for? For nothing at all but to drive men crazy. (*Mais des filles, à quoi cela est-il bon? A rien, qu'à faire enrager les hommes.*) However, I suppose we must take what comes and believe Providence arranges things for the best." Had Perron been able to foresee that his two unwelcome daughters would be married, by the time they were seventeen, to the Count Olivier and the Count Frederic de la Rochefoucauld, respectively, he might have had to admit that Providence had not arranged things too badly.¹ If de Boigne and Perron enriched the fields of northern India with blood, they also enriched some

¹ His daughter by his first marriage, Madeleine, and two of his own four daughters had a flock of descendants and it is interesting to see in the Perron family-tree a Prince Aldobrandini, a Prince Chigi-Albani, a Prince de Chimay, a Princess Bibesco, a Count Esterhazy, a Prince de Faucigny-Lucinge, a Duke de Gramont, a Hennessy and many more whose names are internationally known.

ancient families with Indian gold and with fresh blood as well.

Though he boasted of being offered a command by Napoleon, Perron was never invited to the Tuileries, never received any mark of favour from the Emperor and heard no more of his grading as a Divisional-General. This perhaps explains a curious episode in his old age. He had been pressed by his friends to dictate his memoirs and over a long period had made considerable progress. Then one day his secretary came to ask him to verify a point in an incomplete chapter. Perron made the necessary correction but suddenly, while the secretary's back was turned, picked up the mass of manuscript and threw it on the fire. Neither he nor his secretary ever mentioned it again.

Living in almost complete retirement at Fresne with his new family, spending nearly all his time out of doors, whatever the weather, Perron gained the reputation of being a taciturn man but a good landlord and a generous employer. De Boigne and he kept up a correspondence for more than twenty years. It was conducted in terms of such affection on both sides that it seems to discredit the story (told by the Marquis de Faverges on the authority of Napoleon's general, Belliard), of Perron having boasted on his return to Europe that he had, by his intrigues, forced de Boigne to retire from India and had thus himself been able to work for the French against the English.

Unfortunately the correspondence was somewhat one-sided. In his old age de Boigne became as indefatigable and prolix a letter-writer as the Duke of Wellington, who would work off fifty, some of inordinate length, in a morning. Perron, on the other hand, who wrote with difficulty even before he lost his right hand, had to dictate everything

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to his secretary and was both briefer and more discreet. Besides, *cacoethes scribendi* comes, as in the case of Wellington, from loneliness; Perron, with a young family, was a solitary only from choice.

Thus it is only occasionally that he lets himself go and asks de Boigne whether he remembers how, at the opening of the battle of Lakheri, just as he had climbed into a tree to get a better view, there came bursts from the *canon a mitraille*, which brought down the branches and killed four or five of de Boigne's orderlies alongside him; how thousands of rascals were firing at them from the mountain-side, where they could not get at them; how lucky they were to gain the day; how terrible the slaughter was; how the road was covered with dead for six miles and how fortunate poor Dudrenec had been to have had a good horse; how one of de Boigne's orderlies, when he realised that he had lost a leg, drew his sabre and cut his own throat.

"Why are we fated to live in countries so far away from each other?" writes Perron. "If we were nearer, we could have so many long talks about our past life, about the fair skies and the fine country we have left, and about the thousands of adventures we shared that are known only to the two of us." From Vendôme to Chambéry now seems no more than a longish day's drive in a fast car but it was then a considerable journey for old gentlemen. Nevertheless the early letters are full of plans for meeting.

In August, 1809, Perron has to put off a visit to Buisson Rond because it is too late in the season and because he cannot leave Madame Perron, recently brought to bed with her second daughter. Never mind, "to be sure of not missing it next summer, my dear friend, I shall not start another child this year!" He seems to have kept his

word, for his third daughter was not born until five years later, but something always happened to prevent a meeting.

In 1816 de Boigne suggested that they should go to Italy together and Perron agreed that nothing would please him more: what was such a journey to the two of them, who had travelled so much of the world? Anyway, he would certainly come to Chambéry in the autumn . . . Perron did not come to Chambéry, however, and de Boigne had to go to Italy alone. A projected visit to England, to see the London agents of William Palmer & Co., also fell through. In 1821 they may have met briefly in Paris, but, if so, it was for the first and last time after leaving India. By 1823, though Perron was still being importuned and even ordered to present himself at Chambéry, "like a good and loyal soldier, not like those of to-day," the opportunity had gone by. Madame Perron was seriously ill (she died two years later), and Perron was threatened with the loss of his sight.

De Boigne spent another winter in Italy alone and disliked the people, the country, the climate and the cooking. Italians, except for Tuscans, were dirty and dishonest, Florence was as cold as Savoy, he had hardly had a decent meal since he left home. Nor was Perron to suppose that he had a monopoly of physical troubles. In the competitive spirit of a rather hypochondriacal old man, de Boigne described his own chronic catarrh, which he had now had for fifteen years and which made him cough and spit continually, until he had neither appetite nor energy. Perron was reminded that he had a few years in hand (he was actually the younger by nineteen months), and told that if he did become blind, which de Boigne preferred to think unlikely, the blind were always more contented than the deaf. Perron replied in kind. "May you continue.

my dear General," he wrote, "to be exempt from the ills which overwhelm me!"

Perron did not lose his sight and de Boigne, though he had to spend four months in bed on his return, was not so near the grave as he thought he was. At any rate the journey had, he admitted, been worth while. It had enabled him to perform his religious duties. The difficult thing had been to take the first step: now he hoped to live according to the precepts of religion. "Don't laugh at me," he wrote, "and think that I have come back from Rome a saint. I wish it was so but, alas, a sinner I went there and a sinner I return, though a little less of one, I hope."

The correspondence flowed on, a stream on de Boigne's side, a trickle on that of Perron, but signed on both sides "your ever devoted and affectionate friend." De Boigne writes, when he is nearly seventy-six, of his infirmities, natural seeing how much he took out of himself in his youth; of the set-backs, the anxieties, the obstacles which every young man must experience who has to make his own way in the world; of how he often thinks that "God would have done me a great favour if he had called me to him when I was still a boy, in the age of innocence . . . I hold on to this base world only by a thread." Four years before he had written: "Nothing pleases me any more. To tell the truth, I am disgusted with the world and all its vanities!" Like many men who have found, or re-found, religion late in life, he does not seem to have been exhilarated by it.

Perron, with his failing sight, must have found it tedious to wade through the long succession of "hard-luck" stories. I did so myself, as I sat in the library at Fresne and examined the largest cache of unpublished letters from de Boigne.

With his pen in hand, brooding over his troubles, there is no doubt that he worked himself into a deeper sense of depression the longer he went on—and derived considerable literary satisfaction in the process. The journey to Fresne was, however, well worth while. Two letters enabled me to establish something about de Boigne's Anglophile sympathies which I had felt to be true and for which there was plenty of indirect evidence but which I could not otherwise have proved.

The first was written to Perron on October 20th, 1826, when de Boigne was seventy-five years old. In it he reflects on affairs in India.

"What changes we have seen since our departure," he writes, "the English now being masters of the whole peninsula. It is lucky for us that we finished before this change and before these extraordinary conquests: we would be nobody there to-day."

Up to this point I was familiar with the letter, for it was quoted by Professor Alfred Martineau in a life of Perron which appeared in 1931 and was also quoted by M. Henry Bordeaux in his book about de Boigne. But neither of them saw fit to mention how it went on. (M. Bordeaux may not have seen the original.)

"God be blessed and praised," de Boigne continues, "we must admit that the English nation is the first in the world and that never has so small a country, with so small a population, done such great deeds. It is incredible! England is at the peak of her grandeur, of her glory, of her riches, of her achievements and she will maintain this empire, this power, I believe, since France has sunk so

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far from the pre-eminent place she once held. I do not speak of the Empire under Bonaparte: it was too violent, it came too abruptly for it to last. Nothing remains of it because it was not natural. This Colossus had no base and was founded only on the accidents of fortune; that is why it has dispersed like a cloud. But what does it matter to us? Our grandchildren will have to arrange as best they can and I do not worry my head about it."

The second letter was written a year later. In it de Boigne criticises the French, who do not know what they want. "No form of Government will ever suit their lightness and instability of character . . . From the day of their appointment, ministers are all regarded as having no talent, as being untruthful, corrupt and perfidious . . . Thus France, with all her thirty million inhabitants and her bellicose character, is no more than a second-rate power, while England, with half that number, is great and flourishing and mistress of most of the globe. *But I must say that there are not many men like them, though they have their faults and vices like everyone else.*"

The English in 1826-27, or indeed at most other periods in their history, would doubtless have accepted these handsome tributes as no more than their due. Such opinions could clearly not have been expressed with safety under the Empire. They would have been exceedingly unpopular in 1860 when Savoy, by an overwhelming majority, voted for Union with France, in spite of the angry protests of England and Switzerland. De Boigne's grandson, one of the delegation from Savoy that waited upon Napoleon III to support the union, would hardly have cared to recall his

grandfather's sentiments. They were too much, it would seem, for Professor Martineau, even as late as 1931.

As for Perron, his reply, if he sent one, has not been preserved. But although he had been remarkably well-treated by Wellesley and Lake he could never forgive them for having refused to help him collect and remove the last of his fortune. Praise of the English could hardly have appealed to him. Indeed he prophesied to his son-in-law:

"The English watch over their prey but it will escape them one day. I have never doubted that. You have no idea of the precautions which England and the Company take to close India against European travellers and particularly against the Russians. Never mind, the day will come when all the rulers will unite and rise like one man. Not a single Englishman will escape alive from the country and their reign there will be ended for ever."

Perron was a Frenchman. De Boigne's descendants are completely French. But when he wrote to Lord Macartney in Madras so long ago, disclaiming any intention of rejoining the French army: "I am not of that Nation, nor inclined towards them, having had always the most perfect attachment to the English Government and proposing myself to be for ever in the same opinion," he spoke the truth. French historians must take his word for it. The English may accept it as a compliment to their tough ancestors who served in India.

Finis Coronat Opus

WITH HER beloved father and her not-quite-so-beloved mother living with her in the Rue Bourbon, with her brother Rainulphe happily married to an heiress, with her husband safely at Chambéry (there was never any question of divorce), Adèle had her life arranged to her liking. Paris was not, however, to be taken by storm. The ultra-Royalists by no means approved of Adèle. Ladies of high rank were frequently heard to say that her opinions were "those of a pig." She was a Royalist, indeed, and had hoped and prayed for the Restoration. But she had sense enough to realise that, if the Monarchy were to endure, it was folly to think of reviving all the customs and conventions of the Court of Louis XIV. That was the ambition of the reactionary émigrés and in their eyes any trace of liberalism, any sympathy at all with liberal sentiments, was a crime. Her English education made Adèle suspect and, from their point of view, quite rightly so.

Even her father, who had very much disliked having to serve on the court-martial of Marshal Ney, was regarded as something of a malcontent. When the Duke de Richelieu, most broad-minded of the émigré aristocracy, resigned from the Government and the Marquis d'Osmond insisted on

giving up his Ambassadorship in London immediately afterwards, the King was so incensed with him that he received no mark of recognition and had trouble in getting his pension. Yet he had admirably fulfilled the first duty of an Ambassador, that of establishing good relations with the country to which he was accredited.

Worse than being a liberal, if worse were possible, was to be an "Orléanist," for the King took pleasure in treating the Duke of Orléans with discourtesy when he came to Paris and the "Ultras" took their cue from him. Adèle's friendship with the Duke and his family in England was, therefore, another offence.

Fortunately the King remained attached to "my little Adèle" and the social position of her father and mother was such that even the "Ultras," however much they might disapprove of her, could not refuse invitations to her house. It was not long before such invitations were eagerly sought by persons of all political persuasions.

Then, as now, no woman could preside over a *salon* in Paris unless she had qualities out of the ordinary. Beauty and birth and brains were not enough; nor were riches; nor were wit and the ability to talk well: a talent for inspiring and directing conversation was more important than any of these gifts. Since for nearly fifty years eminent and intelligent men were glad to come to her *salon* and since many of them have written about her in flattering terms, it would be idle to pretend that Adèle did not have it in a marked degree.

When one finds the austere Guizot writing: "I know no house anywhere so pleasant as yours;" when one finds the poet Lamartine a constant visitor; when Madame Récamier writes: "I will give your message to M. de Chateau-

briand; you are one of the very few persons for whose society he still cares"; when one finds Sainte-Beuve sending her an article about a young poet whom he had introduced to her and the Comte de St. Aulaire, Ambassador at Vienna, writing: "All my friends wish to be remembered to you, and do not forget me, I beg of you, in your *salon*," one has to admit that Adèle had personality. The best witness is perhaps Madame Récamier's niece, Madame Lenormand, who writes of her aunt's affection for Adèle: "She liked that strong and charming mind, that archness full of reason, the perfect distinction of her manners, and even the slight shade of disdain which made her friendliness rather exclusive and her approbation more flattering." Both Chateaubriand and Sainte-Beuve were equally complimentary in their memoirs.

As for her own *Memoirs*, though she is not always easy to follow for those who have not a French memory for genealogies, though she is not always accurate and not seldom malicious, her first English publishers¹ were right in saying that they "form an extraordinary record of events, political, social and artistic, spread over three-quarters of a century." No one who is interested in the long period from the Revolution of 1789, through the Restoration, to the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 can afford to ignore them.

In her introduction she wrote: "If my nephews ever glance at these writings, they must not expect to find a book but merely the chatter of an old woman and the piecing together of the conversation of her *salon*; I regard the result as no more valuable than a piece of fancy work. I have successfully used my pen to rest my needle and my needle

¹ Wm. Heinemann, 1907.

to rest my pen and my heirs will receive my manuscript as they might receive an old arm-chair." For once she underestimated herself: the three fat volumes are fascinating. Napoleon, the Duke of Wellington, Talleyrand, Louis XVIII, Marie Antoinette, Josephine Bonaparte, these and hundreds of other figures, great and small, pass in procession across her pages. She was awed by none of her subjects and preferred to catch them off their guard. Her ears were always open for the revealing anecdote and her judgments are not to be despised. Being almost devoid of any sentiment save family pride, she could look more objectively than most people at the world around her.

Her comments on the English scene are both shrewd and caustic. The luxury, the vulgarity, the preoccupation of all classes with money, the endless manœuvres of fashionable mothers in the marriage market, such aspects of it were observed with an eye as clear as that of her contemporary, Jane Austen.

Must one, then, admit to being prejudiced against her out of masculine sympathy for de Boigne? When so many good judges admired her and found her delightful, is it not perverse to take an opposite view? The reader must make up his own mind. There is, however, one other observer at close quarters who, so far as I know, has never been quoted in this context. Just as we saw "the vulgar and brutal husband," (thus Edouard Herriot describes de Boigne), very differently through the eyes of young Thomas Twining, so we see Adèle in a much less favourable light through the eyes of young James Gallatin, son of the Swiss-American who was Ambassador of the United States in Paris from 1816 to 1823.

Like Twining, James Gallatin kept a diary. Plunged,

like Twining, into a strange new world, he also kept his head and formed his own opinions. He does not appear to have been dazzled by Adèle, though he makes a number of references to her, extending over more than six years.

AUGUST 23RD, 1816

"On Thursday father and mother were commanded to dine with the King—a very great honour it seems, and one reserved for princes and ambassadors. A rather amusing incident happened. After dinner a small reception was held. Amongst the ladies received was a Comtesse de Boigne. She is the daughter of the Marquis d'Osmond, ambassador in England. In a loud tone she expressed her astonishment at the presence of Monsieur Gallatin and his wife to the Prince de Condé. His answer to her was: 'His Majesty cannot too highly honour Monsieur Gallatin, as, although representing a new country, his ancestors served France for generations and one was a most honoured and intimate friend of Henri IV.' It seems this got to the King's ears, who was much annoyed, and when Madame de Boigne made her curtsy he turned his back on her. She called on mamma the next day, was most gracious and asked too many questions. They say she is the mistress of the Duc d'Orléans, who is not allowed to come back to France. . . ."

JANUARY, 1817

"At the Elysée Bourbon last evening there was a little singing vaudeville played by children which was very pretty; then supper, and we danced a *contre-danse*, which gave me a chance to cut my 'pigeon's wings.' I cut eight in succession when my turn came as advancing cavalier. Madame de Boigne, in that horrid voice of

hers, said *Très bien, mon jeune Américain*. How I dislike that woman! I cannot help it, she is nothing but pretention. I believe she thinks herself the most important person in France. . . .”

MARCH, 1817

“Madame Récamier has a beautiful hotel. She receives on Thursday evenings, always reclining on a *chaise-longue*. She is certainly very brilliant and witty. She does not like Madame de Boigne and calls her *une prétencieuse*. She says Madame de B. only acknowledges two families, that of the *Bon Dieu* and the Osmonds.”

DECEMBER 8TH, 1819

“We dined yesterday with the Comte and Comtesse d'Orsay . . . Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld was one of the guests—a person very full of his own importance. Also that terrible Madame de Boigne and her brother were amongst the guests; she tackled Father after dinner, asking him all sorts of questions about manners and customs in America. I think he was a little wearied by her, as I heard him say to her, ‘Madame, when we have a social revolution in America we may have better manners, as you have.’ She exclaimed, ‘You are not an American, you are one of us.’ He answered, ‘Pardon me, I represent a young and great country of which I am justly proud.’ She is really a firebrand.”

NOVEMBER, 1820

“Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld, with his usual cynical manner came up to me . . . I never knew a man who fancied himself so much; he is a male Madame de Boigne. . . .”

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NOVEMBER 12TH, 1821

"Ball at the Palais Royal. Frances (his sister) looked lovely and was very much admired . . . Of course, Madame de Boigne had to say something disagreeable to mamma. Looking at Frances, who was dancing with la Rochefoucauld, she said, 'I see you have brought your daughter up à l'Anglaise.' 'No, à l'Américaine,' said mamma, with a strong stare at the opposite wall. . . ."

JUNE 11TH, 1822

"I must acknowledge the dinner at the d'Osmonds was superb. We were forty and the *fine fleur* of society. Madame de Boigne in her own house is an excellent hostess. . . ."

NOVEMBER 8TH, 1822

"We dined at the English Embassy yesterday—a very large company including the Marquis and Marquise d'Osmond—they have just returned from London where he has held the post of French Ambassador for a long time. There were some rather odd stories about Madame d'Osmond. Madame de Boigne, their daughter, has taken a large Hotel in the Rue Bonaparte. Her mother and father are to live with her, not that she needs a chaperone. . . ."

JANUARY 18TH, 1823

"Father has bidden Mother invite the Countess of Stafford to dinner for the 26th. Also the Duke and Duchess of Orléans and Mademoiselle. He has told me to make out a list of the people whom I think will best suit, and to submit it to him, so that he can forward it to the Palais Royal for their approval."

JANUARY, 22ND, 1823

"All our guests have accepted for the 26th. The Duke approved the list. . . ."

JANUARY 23RD, 1823

"An extraordinary note from Madame de Boigne saying she supposed her invitation must have miscarried, but that she accepts with pleasure; what to do? We now have to find another man to balance the table. . . ."

FEBRUARY 10TH, 1823

"That Comtesse de Boigne is irrepressible; she had the audacity to ask mamma at the Spanish Embassy last night if her jewels were real. I cannot understand a woman of her birth and education being so absolutely tactless. I think mamma must have given her a decided answer."

There is no more reason to suppose that Adèle was the mistress of the Duke of Orléans than that her eminently respectable mother had been involved in a drunken orgy with the Prince Regent in London, which was the "queer story" in question. Adèle was also reputed to have been the mistress of the Duke of Fitzjames, though his wife, who was a Dillon, was her greatest friend and died in her arms. The Vicomte de Reiset, an authority on such matters, states it as a well-known fact but does not give any evidence.

What is generally admitted is that her "great and good friend," in the Hollywood euphemism, over a long period of years, was Baron Pasquier, Minister of Justice under Talleyrand and later President of the Chamber. "Pasquier," says the late Lord Norwich, "was one of those familiar figures in political life who, entirely without distinction,

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yet seem to render themselves indispensable to Governments, whose very mediocrity secures them from committing great errors and who fill one office after another with complete lack of imagination and with unimpeachable competence." If this was the great love for which Adèle reserved herself, it does not seem that it can have been a very exciting one.

* * *

When de Boigne wrote to Perron that his life hung only by a thread and that he would be glad to see it snap, he was deluding himself. As is apparent when he leaves the subject of his health and his unhappiness, he did not suffer from that *tedium vitae* which overtakes men of action condemned to idleness in their old age. On the contrary, he was continuously busy. His charities gave him a new interest in life and he administered them as meticulously as he had administered his *jaidads*.

Nor was he as lonely as he made out. He may have felt lonely, as old men do, but it was nonsense to suggest that he lived, like Lord Wellesley, in magnificent solitude and that Perron was his only friend. In Chambéry he knew everyone and everyone knew and respected him. He had many relations, including his favourite brother, Joseph, who had taken his name and had had some exciting experiences in Paris during the Terror, before becoming deputy for St. Domingo. To neighbours like General the Marquis de Faverges, who knew the world, he spoke freely about India and even about individual officers, saying of one that had he not been a gambler, of another that had he not been a drunkard, "he would have done as I did. It was his own fault that he brought back no more than £5000. It was up to him to make a fortune equal to mine." The

General was struck by his modesty, his simplicity and his good sense and by his vision when he came to talk of world affairs. De Boigne's conversation was always interesting, he remarks. Nor did Grant Duff or Thomas Twining see any signs of boredom or senility when they came to Buisson Rond.

Charles, to whom he was devoted, lived in Chambéry and there was a steady succession of grandchildren. It is true that they did not appeal to de Boigne in prospect. "As I have never lived much with young children I don't know whether I shall get as much pleasure out of them as people never tire of telling me I shall," he wrote to Perron. But when Marie-Louise-Césarine had her sixth child in seven years ("that makes two boys and four girls. As she is not yet twenty-five, she will presumably have plenty more, particularly as she produces them so easily that it is hardly more than a game for her"), it was with evident pleasure that he reported that his son and daughter-in-law were "the happiest of human beings."

Perron was far from being his only correspondent: he kept up with many other friends from the past. We find David Anderson, with whom he had spent his blackest hours at Gwalior, after his baggage was stolen, writing from Edinburgh to introduce his son Warren Hastings Anderson. He is to spend the winter in Italy and would like to call when he is in the neighbourhood of Chambéry. Anderson has just heard from "our old friend Dr. Blane," whose eldest son is going into the Greys and whose second is bound for Bombay as a writer. Blane himself writes at the end of 1824, saying that his son also hopes shortly to pass through Chambéry and will call. He complains, indeed, that de Boigne has not written for a long time but says:

"Be assured, I never cease to have the most lively interest in anything that regards you . . . My family often speak of you and call to mind with pleasure and gratitude your goodness and the many acts of kindness they experienced from you."

Lieutenant-General William Palmer had died in India in 1816 and there are no more letters protesting "everlasting affection."¹ But his son's firm and Paxton's, their London agents, continued to act for de Boigne. Anthony Angelo did not die until 1829 and his son Warren Hastings Benet, de Boigne's godson, until 1832. They, like John Walker of the India Office, corresponded mainly with Charles, whom they had known more recently, but never failed to send cordial messages to his father.

One correspondence is unfortunately untraceable. Count Daniel O'Connell, who had become, like de Boigne, a Lieutenant-General, a Commander of the Order of St. Louis, a *Maréchal de Camp* and exceedingly devout, had retired to a large *château* at Madon, near Blois, not far from Perron at Fresne. There he died in 1833. He and de Boigne wrote to each other but the *château* was turned into a barracks by the Germans during the occupation and although masses of papers exist, rooms and attics being filled with them, they are in such confusion that no one has yet attempted to sort them. It would have been interesting to have his comments on the marriage which he was instrumental in arranging.

The d'Osmond family, with the exception of Adèle, seem to have borne no malice. There are at Buisson Rond several very cordial letters to de Boigne from her brother Rainulphe,

¹ Zoffany's portrait of Palmer and "Fyze" was in the portrait exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1956.

Vicomte d'Osmond. Their purpose is to inquire about the possibility of a marriage between Rainulphe's son and one of Perron's daughters! Evidently the appetite of the d'Osmonds for Indian gold increased with eating and barrack-room origins, one generation back, could be overlooked. The Perron daughters, were, however already bespoke and the young man had to marry elsewhere.

Even Adèle continued to write. We know, for example, that she described her shipwreck off Calais. De Boigne does not appear to have kept her letters. One is, however, extant in his uniform-case, a very late one. In it Adèle remarks, excusably if he wrote to her as he wrote to Perron, that she is so accustomed to the gloomy prophecies about his health with which he fills his letters as not to be much perturbed by them. Nevertheless, she must have mellowed a little for Madame Lenormand testifies that she always spoke of de Boigne with respect when, very rarely, she spoke of him at all.

She was even anxious to see him. In January, 1821, he writes to Perron to say how sorry he is to have missed him in Paris. Again the next year "*Mme de Boigne torments me and is so insistent on my coming to Paris to see her that it is possible that I shall do so to keep her quiet.*" He adds, not very gallantly, that if Perron is going to be there, he will undertake the journey and that the pleasure of seeing his old friend again is the only thing that would make him willing to face it.

This sudden desire for her husband's company in Paris perhaps suggests a belated twinge of conscience. More probably it sprang from a desire to show *le Grand Monde* that de Boigne, so conveniently concealed in the country, was really quite presentable. On this point she had satisfied herself the year before [1820] when she had gone over

from Aix, where she was taking the waters, to the opening of the favourite amongst his charities. The Asile St. Benoît was intended to shelter forty persons "from the middle classes of society" who were over sixty years of age and without means. "I heartily approved of this noble idea," writes Adèle, "and had every satisfaction in doing the honours of the first meal given to the refugees and to the local authorities. I spent that day and most of the next with the new inhabitants, whose happiness was a real pleasure to behold. M. de Boigne had left nothing undone to secure their comfort." It may be added that the King of Sardinia was a patron of the institution.

Finis coronat opus. De Boigne's title to an honoured place in Indian history depends less on his battles than on the standards which he set in caring for his troops and in the administration of his territories. In Europe his reputation was redeemed from the folly of his marriage to Adèle by the work he did in his old age. It proved that he had lost none of his humane feelings and none of his organising ability.

The story of a great philanthropist may be less exciting than that of a great soldier. Lists of benefactions mean little if one has not seen on the spot the good that has flowed from them. It is sufficient to say here that no man ever showed greater generosity to the town of his birth than did de Boigne to Chambéry and that few men have ever given away a great fortune with more good sense.

The range of his benefactions was remarkable. Hospitals, with a wing for infectious diseases, an asylum for the insane, another for orphans, a workhouse for beggars, the convent of the Capuchins, the College of the Jesuits which he had himself attended, the *Hôtel de Ville*, the library, a choir, even a theatre—all owed their inception or their enlarge-

ment to his generosity. By the clearance of slums and the cutting of new roads, he transformed the town, without destroying its character. It seemed, said the Municipal Council, that he had only to be aware of their needs to set about satisfying them. In all he spent more than three and a half million francs, a fortune in itself in terms of money of to-day. Because he supervised the spending of every penny of it, not a penny was wasted. In his will, further large sums were left for endowments.

To part with money, when one's dependents are well provided for and one cannot spend even the interest on what one has, is easy enough in old age. To devote all one's thoughts during one's last years to seeing that it is spent to the public advantage is true charity. When de Boigne decided, in his own words to General de Faverges, that "having done enough for the Devil during my life, it is time, however late, to do something for God," he set about the task with the same energy and attention to detail as he had shown in the creation of his brigades. The rules for the Asile de St. Benoît, which he administered himself for ten years, are a model of clarity and run to eighty-five clauses of his own drafting. It is still admirably administered in accordance with them.

Nor was imagination lacking. There were beds in the hospital for foreigners, irrespective of race or creed. There was a fund for providing comforts for prisoners in gaol. Adèle and he had one of their rare laughs together when, to temper the Lenten fast to the shorn lambs in the Capuchin convent, he issued, with the consent of the Jesuit directors, notes on the Chambéry butchers for the supply of two thousand pounds of meat. "He was extremely religious," commented Adèle, "but his religion was in a class of its

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own . . . This mode of fasting pleased me extremely and M. de Boigne himself used to poke fun at his good friends the Capuchins." In his will, every one of his servants was generously provided for and all rents in arrears from his tenants were remitted. At the last, he still ignored Sindhia's instructions to "realise every farthing from the peasants."

In all this work he had the help of his son. Charles was a scholar, with no taste for social life. His main interests were literary and scientific and he became president of the Royal Academy of Science, Letters and Arts of Savoy. Such subjects he liked to discuss with a few chosen friends, scholars like himself. Nevertheless, he took over the administration of his father's trusts, was a Town Councillor of Chambéry, appointed by the King a special Councillor of State and earned a reputation as a philanthropist in his own right. In the hard winter of 1847, whole *communes* lived at his charges.

* * *

With Charles and Marie-Louise-Césarine at his bedside, de Boigne died at Buisson Rond on June 21st, 1830. He was in his eightieth year. It was the fortieth anniversary of the battle of Patan. Perron, who was to die four years later, wrote to his daughter: "I have lost my friend, the only real friend with whom I could sometimes recall the past. . . ."

Chambéry went into mourning. For two days the shops were closed and the bells tolled. When de Boigne was buried with full military and civic honours in the sixteenth century church of Lemenc,¹ the streets were filled as the

¹ You will find it on the left of the road coming in from Aix-les-Bains.

whole town turned out to pay respect to its benefactor. It was to do so again in 1930, when the centenary of his death was celebrated.

That exotic memorial, the Fountain of the Elephants, was quickly put in hand, though, with its large castings and many elaborate ornaments, its bas-reliefs and arrangements of flags and trophies, its pagodas, its representations of "forms of Brahma and Kishna (one of the names of Wishnou) enveloped by the serpent Calengham," its lofty column and statue and above all the four life-size elephants, it was not completed until 1839.

Casually studying the work of the sculptor, M. Sapey of Grenoble, the visitor may wonder what elephants are doing in Chambéry, though it is true that they are credibly reported to have made a passing appearance there with Hannibal. Examining the elephants more closely, he will probably form the impression that they are truncated (as well as equipped with hollow trunks, through which they can blow water at the turning of a tap), for it seems impossible that there should be room for the backsides of all four within the base of the monument. This is an optical illusion and an injustice to M. Sapey. His plans, published in a handsome portfolio in his home-town in 1838, show that he did in fact provide sufficient space for those four massive, if imaginary, posteriors, so that their owners could remain cheek to cheek or, as he put it, *réunis par la croupe*, throughout the centuries.¹

¹ The fountain had a narrow escape during the occupation, when the Germans proposed to demolish it for the metal. Only because the wife of the present Count François de Boigne, formerly Mademoiselle Bugatti, obtained permission to employ local labour for the purpose and delayed starting the work until American aircraft bombed the town and caused the Germans to leave, does it still stand at the top of the Rue de Boigne.

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Preoccupied with the elephants, the visitor may or may not spare a glance for the tall military figure at the top of the column. If he does, the name of de Boigne is hardly likely to ring a bell in his memory. To the people of Chambéry it is as familiar as the name of the city itself. In the elegant Rue de Boigne, where are the smart shops, they buy their *bibelots*, their furs, their hats, their gloves and their *pâtisseries*. They can know but little of its founder's exploits in India. But even the children know that he was a great man who was born in Chambéry and still presides over the place.

In India, fame is more fleeting. When the British Resident in Gwalior inquired about de Boigne in 1870, the then ruler, the Maharaja Sindhia, regretted that he could not recall having heard of anyone of that name. His secretary reported that there was nothing in the Gwalior archives about him.

* * *

Adèle was not present at de Boigne's death-bed. She explains that she would not have dared to pay him a visit without his permission and had written to obtain it. "None the less, I regretted that I had not insisted more earnestly upon a visit to Chambéry in the month of May, in spite of the patient's objection." She does not mention that in his will de Boigne treated her with great generosity, making over to her her dowry of £2500 a year absolutely, without any of the deductions provided for should she remarry, together with all her jewels, silver and furniture and the enjoyment for life of Chatenay and the considerable revenue from the estate, though he had paid for the property and it stood in his name. Indeed, she does not ever mention him

again. It was, however, at Chatenay that she wrote her *Memoirs*, with the story of her marriage.¹

Thus handsomely provided for, Adèle lived for another thirty-six years and died on May 10th, 1866 at the age of eighty-five. She was mercifully not to know that her brother Rainulphe's grandson and her own heir, Osmond, Marquis d'Osmond, would die without issue and that, with his death, the family estates would be sold piecemeal, the castle in Normandy pass into other hands, the archives be dispersed and the name of d'Osmond, that name for which she had, as she said, "a passion that finds no counterpart in this age," pass out of history.

¹ Her autobiographical novel *La Maréchale d'Aubemer* was published in that year, clearly with her approval, and *Une Passion dans le Grand Monde* the year following. Even her admirer, Sainte-Beuve, thought that publication was a mistake.

XXIII

A Shadowy Figure

AND HÉLÈNE? What became of her?

The Indian traveller, Mirza Abu Talib, mentions that he met her in her house at Enfield in 1801-2. Because he came from her own city of Lucknow, she was, he says, overjoyed to see him. He took a letter to her mother and promised to deliver it in Lucknow on his return. After that, the dust of the centuries seems to have settled on the shadowy figure of Héléne. Of the few who have written about de Boigne in French or English, none could say when she died or where she had lived out her days.

Before I met the Countess de Boigne, I had only one clue. The Indian historian, the late Sir Jadunath Sarkar, already over eighty, wrote to me that he seemed to recall that the late Sir Evan Cotton, after reading a paper on de Boigne to the Indian Historical Records Commission in Lucknow in December, 1926, had said something about Héléne having lived not only in Middlesex but in Sussex. I wrote to the County Records Office in Chichester to ask whether, by any chance, they had any record of Héléne Bennett or Benet or de Boigne. By return of post I was informed that I could be supplied with a photostat copy of her will for

thirteen shillings! This, then, is the end of the story of Hélène.

De Boigne did not see her before leaving England for ever. "I will not take leave of you, knowing that it would only cause you distress." But he was content to leave the children in her charge. "I will not recommend you, my dear Begum," he wrote, "to give your earnest care and attention to their principles, yours having always been those of a good and well-behaved woman. They could never be under a better guardian than you, so I am perfectly easy in regard to it when at home, as also in regard to their health, as you have always been to them a good Mother. They will, when of age, be sensible of it and prove in return to be dutiful children to you, in being the comforts and supports of your old days.

"So it shall be. I have seen you a good daughter to your mother, an affectionate wife to me and tender mother to your two offspring. God will reward you. . . ." He ends "Keep your health! Be happy?—and believe me with most sincere affection for ever, your friend. . . ."

After the tragic death of her daughter at Beauregard, in December, 1804, Hélène withdrew to the depths of the country. De Boigne bought for her Great Ground House, in the hamlet of Lower Beeding in Sussex, about three miles from Steyning. The house, which is now in ruins, seems to have been not much more than a cottage, in spite of its resounding name, but five hundred acres of land went with it. "My dearest child," wrote Hélène to de Boigne, "enjoys it so much, thinking that this is our own."

Great Ground House was to be Hélène's home for so many long years that she must have become an almost

legendary figure in that quiet corner of Sussex. But legends are forgotten or distorted and we should know little about her life there were it not for Mrs. Budgen. Born Caroline Colin, Mrs. Budgen was H  l  ne's personal maid for a time, until she married James Budgen, who also worked on the property, and the two of them were set up in a farm close by.

It was half a century after H  l  ne was dead, when Mrs. Budgen was herself an old woman of eighty-two, in the last year of her life (having survived Budgen by more than twenty years), that someone, perhaps a de Boigne grandson or great-grandson, questioned her about her former mistress. A note of their conversation, unsigned and undated and hastily scribbled in French, I discovered slipped in amongst de Boigne's papers in Chamb  ry. It was obviously jotted down in Sussex, the items in any order, as one random recollection led to another, and it fills no more than a single sheet of writing-paper. But because Mrs. Budgen had a countrywoman's memory and because this must have been the strangest experience in her long and uneventful life, one can see H  l  ne in extreme old age as clearly as though Toulouse-Lautrec had painted her.

She was a queer figure to the young Caroline Colin, who used to sleep in her bedroom. Sallow in complexion, with strange dark eyes, she would sometimes stay in bed until noon and often kept on her night-cap when at last she got up. She took no trouble at all about her dress but wore magnificent rings. She smoked long pipes (presumably a hookah), lost her temper very easily and could not bear to be bothered about anything.

On Saturdays she would dress herself more carefully and Budgen would drive her over to Horsham in the pony-cart.

There she would go to Mass on Sunday and return to the Forest (St. Leonard's Forest), on Monday. She had a strange character, said Mrs. Budgen, but was exceedingly good to the poor and often sent to Horsham for bread to distribute amongst them. She was also very fond of animals and bought numbers of all kinds. She spent money recklessly and because she was excessively generous people could easily take advantage of her.

When Caroline, now Mrs. Budgen, had moved to the farm, she would often come over to see and help her. What did they talk about? Echoes of strange conversations drift up from Mrs. Budgen's girlhood memories. H  l  ne had been a queen in her own country, she said, and was married against her will when she was ten years old¹ . . . She had brought back her two children with her from India but her daughter was dead . . . She had died on board a ship and had been thrown into the sea . . . (By now, no doubt, H  l  ne had convinced herself that it was "someone else" who had been responsible for Ann's death.)

Shortly before her own death H  l  ne had put her property up for sale. It was not sold until six months later but the trustees got a good price for it. It was near "Mrkmil its rats." Here I thought old Mrs. Budgen must have been wandering in her mind. Not so: "Mrkmil its rats" is clearly "Mick Mills's Race," a long avenue of fir trees in St. Leonard's Forest, where Mick Mills had a race for a wager with the Devil, which he won. It is shown on the Ordnance Sheet.

¹ This tends to confirm a rumour that she was the widow of the Nawab of Pundri when she met de Boigne. If so, it is possible that, as often happens in India, she was betrothed and married as a child and that the Nawab died before the marriage was consummated.

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Because she was occupied in having twins when H  l  ne was on her death-bed, Mrs. Budgen was unable to visit her to say good-bye. She herself lived until 1908 and must have been one of the very few who survived into this century with first-hand memories of H  l  ne.

H  l  ne died in North Street, Horsham on December 27th, 1853, aged eighty-one. She had thus lived in Sussex for nearly fifty years. She outlived de Boigne by twenty-three years and her beloved son Charles by five months, for he died in Chamb  ry on July 23rd of that year. She made her will on August 5th, immediately she heard of his death, and left her property in trust for his sons. Her trustees and executors were John and Michael Walker and her solicitor, Pilford Medwin. The Pilfords were cousins of the Shelleys and the poet had written to Thomas Medwin, Pilford's father, to find him a house in Sussex. "Let it be in some picturesque retired place—St. Leonard's Forest, for instance." Had he settled there, he would have found a neighbour as eccentric as himself.

H  l  ne was buried at Horsham on January 4th, 1854. Though she was a devout Catholic, the ceremony was performed by the Rev. A. W. Cornwall, curate of the parish. The grave is the second on the right as one enters the churchyard and abuts on the path. It is marked by a flat stone on a brick plinth. The inscription, which commemorates "Mrs. Helena Bennett, widow of General Bennett, Count de Boigne," is covered with moss and almost illegible. The grave can, however, be easily identified, for in all the churchyard it is the only one which is sited north and south instead of east and west. Why this should be so I cannot say. There is still a tradition in Horsham that it is

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that of "a Persian princess whose husband treated her abominably." But traditions based on half-truths tend to be intolerant. Nor can two lives be fairly summed up in a sentence. The reader may perhaps take a more charitable view.

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The Russian Riddle

DE BOIGNE

is captured at Tenedos	Early summer,	1774
is released by Turks	November,	1774
sets out overland to India but has		
to turn back to Baghdad	probably early	1777
appears in Cairo	autumn,	1777
arrives at Madras	January,	1778
resigns his commission to go over-		
land to Russia	April,	1782
meets Warren Hastings in Calcutta	May-June,	1782
reaches Lucknow	September,	1782
goes with Major Browne to Agra	February-March,	1783
is robbed by Sindhia	June,	1783
having renounced the idea of going		
overland to Russia, joins Sindhia	December,	1784

THE CIRCUMSTANCES in which de Boigne abandoned his plan of proceeding overland to Russia and decided on "endeavouring to find employment in the service of some native prince" have been described in Chapter VII.

There may well have been another reason for his decision. At the beginning of 1783 George Forster, of the civil service of the East India Company, arrived in Lucknow. So good a linguist was he that, posing as a Muslim merchant, he remained there undetected by Europeans and Indians alike. His intention also was to reach Russia overland by way of the Caspian Sea.

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While de Boigne was held up at Agra and afterwards at Gwalior, Forster had already reached Kashmir in April, 1783. After a remarkable journey, he arrived in Moscow and Petersburg in May, 1784. In July he was in London. De Boigne could not have known of his success when he renounced his own project. But he could easily have learnt, when he was summoned by Hastings to Calcutta, that Forster was well ahead of him. With every advantage of passports, introductions, money and a great gift for languages and disguises (he passed as a Turk, educated in India, as a Kashmiri, as an Arab, as a Shia, as a Sunni and as an Indian Christian), Forster was certain, barring accidents, to be first. De Boigne's journey was no longer necessary.

Meanwhile, on December 12th, 1783, the Empress Catherine had sent a special and personal *ukase* to Prince Potemkin, then in the Caucasus, saying that "several vagabonds of French origin, *one of whom is called St. Genies*," had recently appeared in Constantinople and were proposing to travel to Russia. They must not be allowed to do so and watch must be kept at the frontier with the greatest vigilance to deny entry to St. Genies and those like him¹. This Saint Genies is reputed to have been an agent of Count Charles de Vergennes, Minister for Foreign Affairs under Louis XVI. He was in Constantinople in 1784.

Also in Constantinople in that year, charged with a mission by de Vergennes, was Prince Charles of Nassau-Siegen. As a Colonel in the French Army, he had taken part in the abortive expedition against Jersey of 1780 and in the siege of Gibraltar in 1782. In December, 1786 he met the Empress Catherine and Potemkin at Kiev, was well received by them and early in 1788 entered the Russian service, in which he was made a Rear-Admiral.²

Is there anything to connect either Saint Genies or the Prince of Nassau-Siegen with de Boigne? In the case of the Prince,

¹ *Sbornik*, vol. 27, p. 290.

² (S. N. Shubinsky, *Istoricheskie Ocherki i Rasskazy*, St. Petersburg, 1903, 4th edition, p. 370 et seq. Also *Un Palatin au XVIIIe siècle—Le Prince Charles de Nassau-Siegen, correspondance originale inédite de 1784-1789*. D'Aragon, Paris, 1893.)

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the link, though very tenuous, is there. The closest friend of Nassau-Siegen was Daniel O'Connell, who had saved his life at the siege of Gibraltar and whom he tried, unsuccessfully, to take with him to Russia. This was the same Daniel O'Connell who joined the Regiment of Clare, as Adjutant, at the same time as de Boigne. When de Boigne arrived in England in May, 1797, O'Connell at once became his intimate friend, introduced him to Adèle d'Osmond, arranged his marriage and was best man at his wedding on June 11th, 1798.

I have been unable to trace the early history or movements of Saint Genies. But according to the Russian Military Encyclopædia, (St. Petersburg, 1912, vol. IV, p. 617):

"In 1791 a project of an expedition to India was presented to Catherine II by a Frenchman, St. Genies, through the Prince of Nassau-Siegen."

This is elaborated in the papers of Prince Nassau-Siegen (op. cit., pp. 383-4) where there is a note to the effect that, introduced to Napoleon by the Russian Ambassador, probably in 1799, Nassau-Siegen had several conversations with him on a subject particularly interesting to both of them, an attack by Russia and France on the British possessions in India. This vast project, says the note, had often occupied his mind and he may have proposed it to Potemkin in 1786. Anyway, "*a French émigré, M. de Saint Genies, a former agent of M. de Vergennes, had already prepared for the Prince of Nassau-Siegen, who presented it in 1791 to the Empress Catherine, a complete plan for the invasion of Bengal by Bokhara and Kashmire, with a map and an itinerary.*" It was turned down by Potemkin because Poland seemed to offer more immediate advantages.

How had Saint Genies been able to prepare a detailed plan and itinerary for the invasion of Bengal by Bokhara and Kashmir as early as 1784-6? George Forster's account of this journey from Bengal to Russia was not published in Calcutta until 1790, in London until 1798 and in Paris until 1802. But the route was identical with that which de Boigne had in mind in 1782, when he resigned his commission in India to follow it. He can only have mapped it out between his release from a Turkish

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prison in 1774 and his arrival in Madras in January, 1778—in other words, during his three missing years, when he *was* in Constantinople for a time and *did* try to make his way to India by the normal overland route.

Are we to assume that Saint Genies hit on precisely the same idea quite independently or is it not more probable that somehow, directly or indirectly, he obtained it from de Boigne?

This is not the end of the story or the only coincidence involved. The plan was revived in full force by Catherine's successor, Paul. In a dispatch to Napoleon he proposed that, with a combined army of 70,000 men, France and Russia should "chase the English from India, liberate that rich and beautiful country from the English yoke and open new roads to England's commercial rivals and particularly to France." Later, in 1801, after the alliance between France and Russia had come to an end, Paul ordered General Vassily Petrovich Orlov, *ataman* or general of the Don Cossacks, to prepare all the forces of the Don Cossacks for the invasion of India, with the object of bringing the land "into the same dependence on Russia in which it now stands towards England." Orlov had covered more than 450 miles in a month in winter with 22,000 Cossacks when Paul was assassinated (March 22nd, 1801) and the new Czar, Alexander I, recalled him.

The plan did not die with Paul, however. We find Napoleon urging it upon Alexander and Alexander agreeing to co-operate. It was only when the two Emperors fell out that the idea was abandoned—temporarily so far as the Russians were concerned.¹

We know that Prince Nassau-Siegen was in Paris in 1802, acting as *facteur diplomatique* or diplomatic courier between Talleyrand, Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Czar Alexander. We know that Daniel O'Connell was there in 1802 for when war broke out again in May, 1803, he was interned for a time as the holder of a commission, signed by King George III, in the reconstituted Irish Brigade, but was quickly set at liberty and given permission to remain at large in Paris. We know that de Boigne was in Paris from the beginning of 1802 onwards.

¹ (Russian Military Encyclopedia, vol. XVII. *Russian Projects Against India* by H. Sutherland Edwards, London, 1885.)

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Did the three ever meet? There is no evidence that they did, but we can take it as almost certain that O'Connell was in touch with de Boigne, from whom he had parted in England only a year previously, and that he would take the first opportunity of renewing his old friendship with Nassau-Siegen. If he did not introduce the two, must he not at least have mentioned de Boigne to the Prince, as one soldier to another, in view of de Boigne's great military reputation, his great fortune and the fact that he, too, had once been in the Russian service?

Nassau-Siegen had already had several conversations with Napoleon, three years earlier, about a Russian invasion of India. Is it not more probable that it was at his suggestion that the offer of the command of such an expedition was made to de Boigne in 1803, than that Napoleon should write to him in his own hand out of a clear sky? And would not the suggestion carry more weight if Nassau-Siegen could say that de Boigne was actually the originator of the plan which he and Saint Genies had put up to the Empress Catherine—or had at any rate hit on precisely the same route some years earlier?

Talleyrand, as Minister of Foreign Affairs and the man for whom Nassau-Siegen was acting as liaison officer with the Czar, would undoubtedly be consulted. And even if they did not meet, the name of de Boigne would certainly be known to Talleyrand, if only as Adèle's husband. For de Boigne was still supporting his father-in-law, the Marquis d'Osmond, and Talleyrand had known d'Osmond in childhood and had a high opinion of him. (After the fall of Napoleon it was Talleyrand who personally obtained for him the French Ambassadorship in Turin and later in London.)

Circumstantial evidence is cumulative. These few straws in the wind are far from making it conclusive. Yet they suggest that there was something in de Boigne's career, relating to Russia, which he preferred to keep secret.

The secret was carefully guarded long after his death. His first biographer, whose name, by a queer coincidence, was Victor de Saint-Genis, had access to his papers, though not, I fancy, to the correspondence with Hélène and Adèle. His book was published in Poitiers in 1873.

Clearly he could not conceal the fact that de Boigne had once been in the Russian service, for it was generally known. But when he came to deal with the projected journey from India to Europe, he suppressed all mention of the purpose and destination. According to Saint-Genis, he was to travel from Lahore to Kabul and across Afghanistan and Persia "in order to gain the northern regions of Asia, so rarely explored." There is not a word about going to Russia to rejoin the Russian army.

This is the more surprising because Grant Duff, in his *History of the Mahrattas*, from which Saint-Genis quotes freely, had mentioned it in a footnote, on de Boigne's authority. Moreover, Major Lewis Ferdinand Smith, in the first of his "Longinus" letters, which Saint-Genis gives *verbatim*, though in small type and in an appendix, had given the proposed itinerary and destination correctly. Smith added that de Boigne came to India with the express object of making this journey but concealed the fact and the identity of his employers from Warren Hastings.

Why was Saint-Genis so cagey? Perhaps because the only logical alternative to believing that de Boigne was a Russian agent was to believe that he had agreed to work for Hastings and the British. That Saint-Genis would have been most loth to do. His book shows that, having swallowed all Edmund Burke's ravings about Warren Hastings, he imagined him to have been a monster of depravity and no fit friend for his hero.

Moreover, at the time that he wrote, the English were more than usually unpopular in France, because of their pro-German sympathies in the Franco-Prussian war. To have admitted, what we now know to be the truth, that de Boigne's sentiments were always, from the time that he arrived in India until his death, pro-British and anti-French would have been singularly inconvenient. It would also have made nonsense of the ideas that Saint-Genis attributed to him. Let us be charitable and assume that among the papers which Victor de Saint-Genis did not see was the parchment, bearing the seal of George III, which made him a naturalised British subject!

There is a tail-piece to the Russian story which gives it a topical interest. In the August, 1956 issue of *News*, "a Soviet Review of World Events," Professor Georgi Pokrovsky, Doctor

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of Technical Sciences, Major-General in the engineering service and an authority on the physics of explosion, propounds a scheme for a Trans-Himalayan railway, with engines driven by atomic power, and pictures the Kirghiz-Kashmir express arriving from the Soviet Union by way of Kashgar and Srinagar in the station of New Delhi. The Russians, it seems, have not abandoned the idea of an overland route to India.

A Bibliographical Note

MY MAIN source of hitherto unpublished material has been the personal papers which General de Boigne himself preserved at Buisson Rond. Many of these were made available to his first biographer, Victor de Saint-Genis, but he either did not see or did not use some of the most interesting, perhaps because greater discretion was felt to be desirable in 1872 than is necessary in 1959. Moreover, he wrote before the publication of the Countess de Boigne's *Memoirs* and could not know how vicious a posthumous attack was to be made on his hero. Many more letters must have been destroyed by de Boigne or dispersed after his death and there must still exist a mass of business papers relating to his property in London, etc., which I have not asked to see because they would be of no general interest.

I have also been able to draw freely for unpublished material on the letters to Perron which have been preserved at Fresne. Extracts from these were used by Perron's biographer but his selection was naturally made with an eye mainly to his own subject. Other quotations come from the Bengal Select Committee and Secret Committee consultations, from the Home Miscellaneous Series (both in the India Office), from the Poona Residency Correspondence, edited by Sir Jadunath Sarkar, from the proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission, from *Bengal Past and Present* and from the files of Calcutta newspapers.

I have not thought it necessary to give precise references because the student of Indian history will be able to find them easily enough from the dates in the text and the general reader, for whom this book is intended, will not want them.

So much has been written about India at this period that it would be pretension on my part to append a long list of the

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authorities I have consulted only in the hope of finding something new or to make a cross-check. The books that are listed below are named because they refer directly to de Boigne or his associates and because they are interesting in themselves (some of them immensely so), though too many are long since out of print.

Herbert Compton's sketch of de Boigne's career still holds the field as the most readable and generally accurate account. His book contains so much more of interest about other European adventurers in India that it deserves to be reprinted. Compton, however, like de Saint-Genis, wrote before the publication of the *Memoirs* of the Comtesse de Boigne. Victor de Saint-Genis's biography contains a large amount of valuable material but is a dull book. Recently M. Henry Bordeaux has rewritten and enlivened it but he had not gone to the original authorities and it is a pity that so distinguished a historian should have accepted at second-hand the now completely exploded estimate of Warren Hastings. In representing de Boigne as pro-French and anti-English in his sympathies he is contradicted by de Boigne's own letters.

(The references to Russian authorities are given in the Appendix.)

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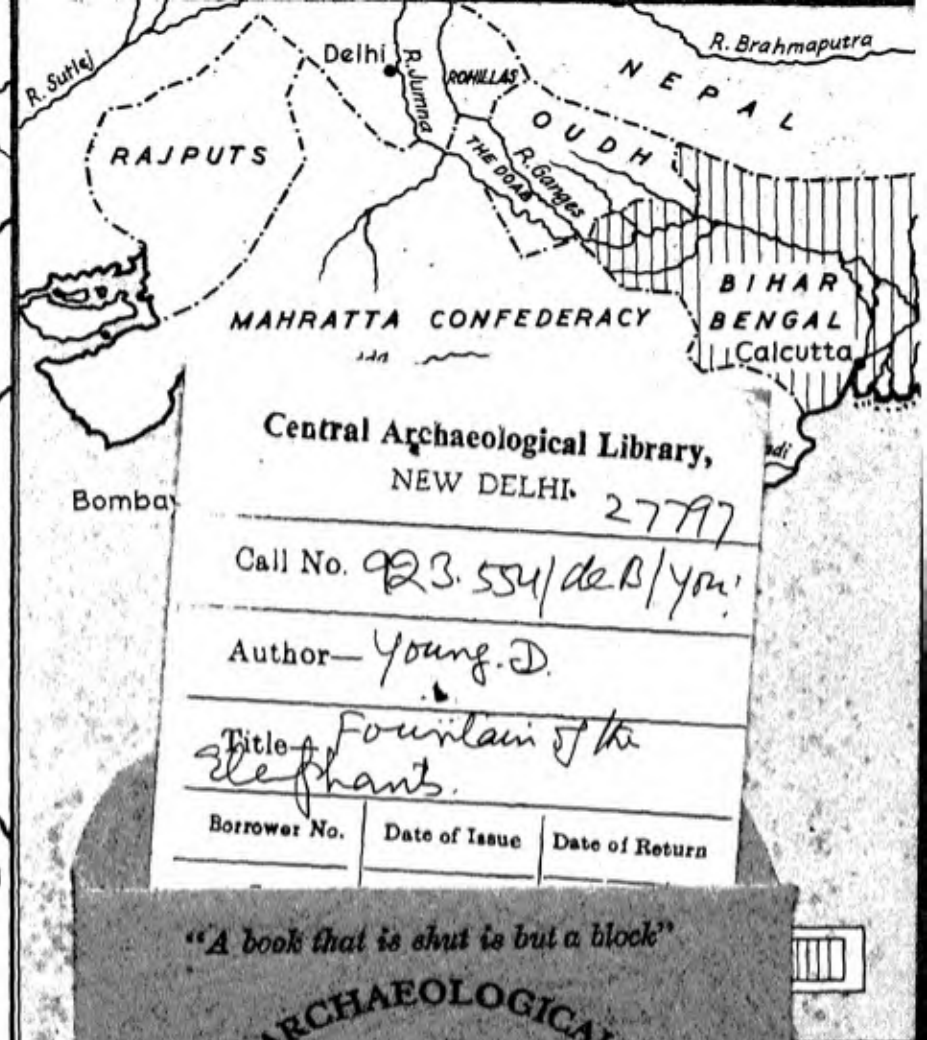
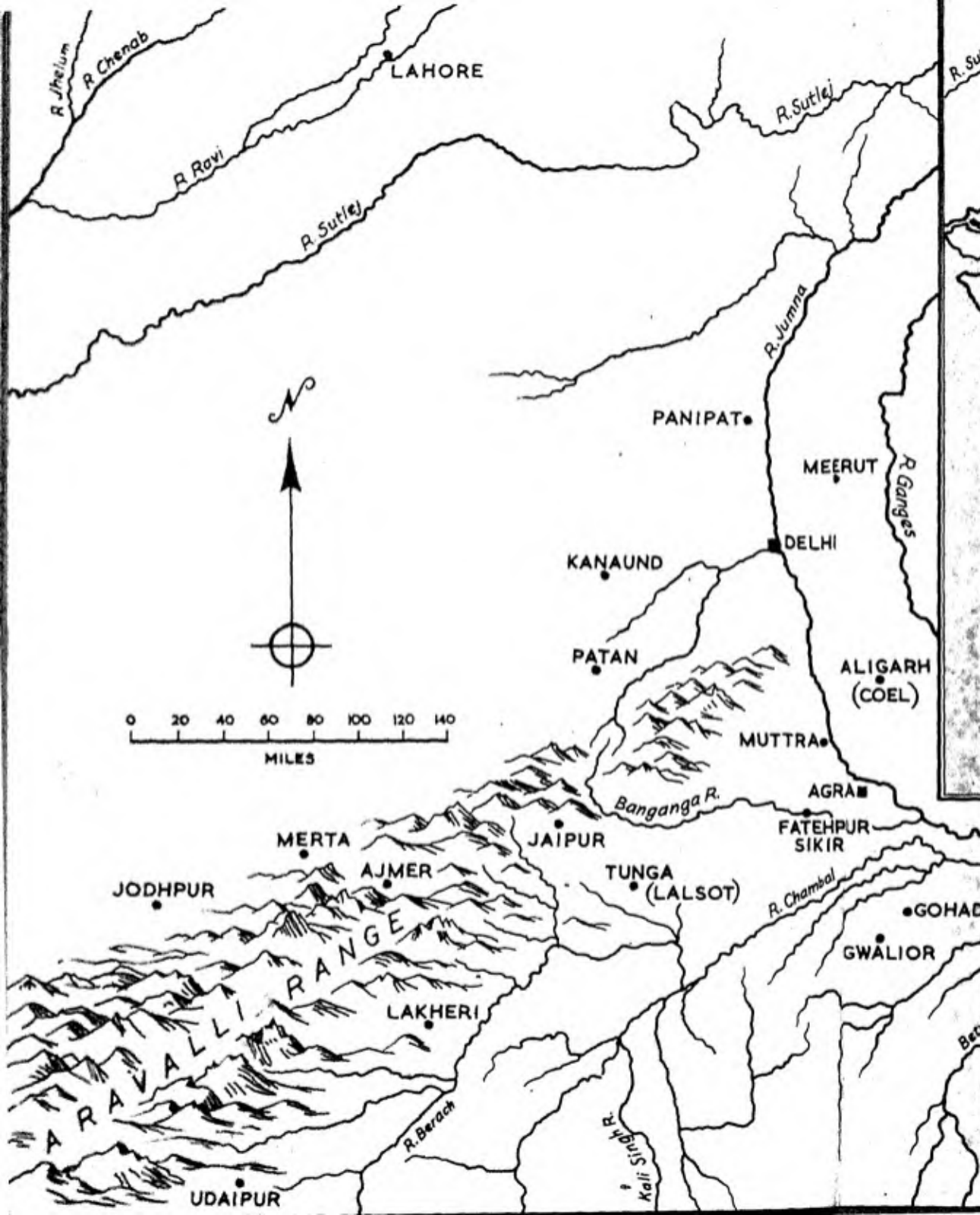
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